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OF
ARTHUR H. ADAMS

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THE
COLLECTED VERSES
OF
Arthur H. Adams

Author of
MAORILAND AND OTHER VERSES, THE NAZARENE,
LONDON STREETS, etc., etc.



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By the Same Author

VERSE :

Maoriland and Other Verses (The Bulletin Newspaper Co., Sydney.)

The Nazarene (Phillip Wellby, London.)
This book is now out of print, but a few copies may be had, price 2s. 6d., from the author.

London Streets (Foulis, Edinburgh).
Copies may be had from the publisher, from Lothian, Melbourne, or from the author, price 2s. 6d.

NOVELS :

Tussock Land (Fisher Unwin, London).

Galahad Jones (John Lane, London).

A Touch of Fantasy (John Lane, London).

The New Chum (N.S.W. Bookstall Co. Sydney).

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DEDICATION



TO MY WIFE.

*You read through to the end,
Then whispered jealously,
"But, oh, you haven't penned
A single verse to Me!"*

*But all the love you give
Dare I in words disperse?
When in my heart you live,
What? Bury you in verse?*

FOREWORD

In the compilation of this book some twenty pieces of verse have been selected (and revised) from the 67 items in my first book of verse, *Maoriland and Other Verses*, published thirteen years ago; a number of verses appear now for the first time; and the rest have been published in "The Bulletin," "The Lone Hand," and a few other magazines, Australian and English. To the proprietors of these magazines and the publisher of *Maoriland and Other Verses*, I have to acknowledge my indebtedness for permission to reprint.

Roughly, this selection represents about one-fourth of my serious shorter verse. The contents of two separate volumes of my verse entitled *The Nazarene* and *London Streets*, have not been drawn on for this volume. Apart from the considerations of space, it seemed to me that these volumes, being each practically one complete poem, should be left untouched; and excerpts would not sufficiently represent their contents.

This collection may be said to be, as far as is humanly possible, definite and final. It contains the selections from my verse-work which I think representative. At the age of forty the poet, or the would-be poet, should leave the pleasant, twisting by-paths of poetry for the dustier, though broader and more direct, highway of prose. By that critical age he should have sufficiently, if inadequately, explored those by-paths; for by then he no longer possesses the best equipment, nor the right attitude of mind, for that joyous adventure. It may confidently be left to the shouting army of Youth.

ARTHUR H. ADAMS.

"Marama,"

Cremorne Road,

Cremorne Point,

Sydney.

January, 1913.



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A FOREWORD: FOR THE CRITICS

A bird was singing on a tree.
The critics listened patiently,
Their ears to all his rapture shut.
"A pretty song," they murmured, "But—

"When we the melody dissect
We do not find it quite correct;
This passage might be better phrased,
This cadence possibly erased.

"If to his notice we might bring
The rules we've made for birds that sing—
We've written them all down in ink . . .
If only we could make him *think*!

"But, as it is, the thing 's absurd;
He's not a poet, just a bird."
In raucous tone—the critic-croak—
Their firm convictions thus they spoke.

Meantime the bird, in careless glee,
Was singing, singing on his tree.
The critics found a note was wrong:
It was the bird that found the song.

FOREWORD FOR THE CRITICS

And still the critics listened glum,
And strove his faults to overcome;
For criticism was, they knew,
The only thing that they could do.

So from their task they did not shrink;
They wrote that rapture down in ink;
They found another note was wrong:
The bird had found another song.

Maori Legends

Marama: The Moon God

A South Sea Legend.

Enamoured of dark Ina's little breasts,
Pale Marama, the Moon-God, dreaming leant
Low from his grey canoe, whose eager sail
Bore him too swiftly past her island home.

For as his venturing prow athwart the night
Flung cloudy spray, he lingered and he saw
Dark Ina droop and falter, faint with love,
Deep in the arms of earth-born Tangata.

And Marama, with all the blossom-stars,
Fadeless and perfect, for his hand to pluck,
Yet felt his chill blood startled into warmth,
And knew he loved this little nestling flower,
Dewy with youth and tremulous with all
The wonder and the strangeness of the world,
Whose doom was but a brief, tempestuous day,
A little loving and a quiet death.

He knew the stars were like a chain of shells,
Fadeless and perfect, swung across the years;
And yet he loved this little nestling flower—

MARAMA: THE MOON GOD

Glistening on earth a moment like a tear—
A soft thing born to blossom and to fade
And flicker like a dry leaf to the grass.

One night to meet her lover Ina went,
With eyes a-dream, her hair a dusky cloud
Starred with the red hibiscus, and her lips
And limbs and long slim body ripe for love.

The breeze, warm-scented as her lover's breath,
Whispered and went, and on the moon-laved beach
The wavelets pouted and complained. The dark
Was passionate, mysterious, a-throb,
And all the earth with love was magical.

She listened for his coming at the pool
Filled with old dreams, brimming with memories
Of words most wondrous, and of silences
More wonderful. Lo, how the palms above
Retold the murmur of their long farewells!

Sudden a radiance blazed about the maid,
And every fern-frond gleamed, a silver thing,
And creek and pool were molten! At her side
Flamed shimmering the Moon-God, Marama!

"I love you!" he was saying, and his voice
Was low and sweet with sighs, and infinite
In tenderness, and grave and soft with tears.
(It seemed the fainting echo of some old tune
She just remembered she had long forgot.)

MARAMA: THE MOON GOD.

"I love you, Ina ; for my heart is thrilled
With strange unwonted warmth, and all my world,
That seemed a bowl of flame, a crescent fire,
Is cold and desolate and lone and cold.
And all the stars are cold ; and I shall die
Unless you give me all your bosom's dower
Of human love!

"Dark Ina, lean to me,
And I shall throne you in the spacious night
To shame the changeless stars with the rich bloom
Of your brief life—nay, you shall never cease,
But at this budding morning of your day
Remain for ever. Your young heart shall send
A flush of Spring-time through Eternity."

And Ina trembled toward him. (It was sweet—
This half-remembered music long forgot!)
And Marama, the Moon-God, pleaded still :
"Your earth-born lover, Tangata, must fall
And waver down to darkness like a leaf
Plucked by the quiet hand of passing Death."

Her Tangata! Across the swirling strain
Of that vague haunting music broke the word,
A sudden discord ; and she stood erect.

"I love him," said she simply, "and he loves.
What talk is this of alien things? We love."

MARAMA: THE MOON GOD

But Marama still pleaded, and his voice
Was low and sweet with sighs, and infinite
In tenderness, and grave and soft with tears.
"I love you, Ina!"

(Now, ah! now, she knew
The meaning of the strain. It was the song
Of love that drifts for ever down the years,
Its every note a sigh, within whose strands
Is woven all the passion of the world—
All that was ever uttered to a maid,
And all the endless sweet unutterable!)

And so she trembled toward him, and he drew
Her slowly in his arms, and like one flame
Swaying and floating in a restless air
The two moved ever upward through the dark.

And Tangata, bereft, sought all that night;
And stumbled through long years in search of her.

But Marama was kind; and Ina learnt
To love his patient tenderness. He taught
Her all the traffic of his silver world:
She smoothed the shining clouds across the sky
With patient hands, or petulantly flung
Into the blue the flying wisps of white
That chase the scudding sunbeams over the hills;
And in the twilight noiselessly she drew
The filmy veil of night about the world,
With mother-words hushing the earth to sleep.

MARAMA: THE MOON GOD

But after many years her lonely heart
Whispered for Tangata; and to his land
Of silver flame the Moon-God brought the Man.

The lovers met, and sighed; for love was dead.
Still Ina was as flawless as a flower
Breaking to blossom; but the years that passed
Unseen, soft-footed, in that place of gods,
In the man's frame had dug their talons deep,
And he stood grey and gnarled, as if his soul
Had shaken off the cunning dye of lip,
The padded curve of throat and limb, wherewith
Life decks us out for our brief journey. Now
He stood forth proudly, naked in his strength,
Tense, watchful, valiant, every muscle tried,
A runner stripped and ready for the race—
The last great race with Death. And so they stood,
The mortal and the immortal changing looks.

Then Tangata bent low; for love was dead.
She was a goddess, distant as a star;
But, flashing like drowned faces on the stream
Of his disordered thoughts, swirled memories
Of moonlit nights, the ever-questing creek,
The pool dream-haunted, the remembering palms
That murmured still the lovers' long farewells.

He sighed. Man's pitiable lot was his:
To see the dawn flare ruddy from the hills,
The beacon of a day he will not know;

MARAMA: THE MOON GOD

To taste the perfect promise of the bud
That will not bloom for him; to dream—and die.

But, ah! the gods might reach the golden end,
Go singing from the first kiss to the last—
Each perfect moment sweeping to the next,
More perfect! “O, this narrow life!” he cried.

But Ina caught him to her with a moan.
“O comfort me, for I have cast away
My heritage! For ever I have done
With hopes and fears; I may not even dream.
For I know all there is and is to be.
There are no shadows on my soul; no mist
Dims my far gaze; and pitilessly clear
The narrow vistas of the years sweep out
To cold infinity. As with a wall
The future shuts me in; there is no room
For aspirations or despairs when all
Appointed Time is mine this hour.

“But you,
Poor starvling dwellers in the dusk below,
May sigh and wish and wonder. And your life,
That flickers fitfully and glooms again,
Is lit with wild impossibilities
And glorified with dreams and budding hopes.

“For you are born swathed in the cloud of Night,
And dream through some great hours of fantasy,

MARAMA: THE MOON GOD

And die in rosy mists. Out from the dark,
Pulsing with rich uncertainties, you come ;
And, with your hearts' quest still unsatisfied,
Into the dark again. You have your dreams,
Your royal yearnings and your grey despairs,
That fleck this sombre life of yours with hues
Of sunset splendor. Ah! you mortals pluck
A glory that the gods can never win.
This, Tangata, the wondrous heritage
I flung away with Death. O, comfort me!"

And Tangata was silent ; then he laid
His sorrow down, and said, "I may not love
The maiden, but the goddess I may serve."

And Ina with a sigh turned to her task.
And so for many busy months the two
Who once had kissed and trembled, silently
Labored in loving service to the world,
Goddess and slave, until the appointed time
When Tangata must die. Then Ina said,
"Sweet is the red hibiscus, but it fades ;
And fair the palm-tree, but the palm must fall."

And Tangata sighed wearily ; for now
His time had come, and he was tired of all,
And ready for his grapple with his foe
Down in the valleys of the dusk.

MARAMA: THE MOON GOD

And calm
His answer. "Fair the palm-tree, but it falls;
And sweet the red hibiscus ere it fades.
But palm and flower have heard the song of winds
From far-off dreamy islands faintly blown,
Bearing the mandate of a dim unrest
That stirred and wondered, stirred and would not die.
And palm and blossom doomed to fall and fade
Have felt the fragrant fingers of the rain
Caressing frond and petal with the touch
Of a blind soul that yearned for brotherhood—
All dumb things vaguely merging into one!

"So this poor futile life that, too, must fade
Is fragrant with your love and musical
With low-voiced memories: so it dies content.
And here in Marama's bright realm no shade
Of Death may enter; therefore let me go
And meet my old antagonist on earth,
Down in the valleys of the dusk to run
My last great race."

He ceased; and Ina flung
Athwart the sky a many-colored bow,
And Tangata, his old grey head erect,
Descended to the dusk.

And to this day
That radiant span is bright with Ina's tears.

The Strangling Cord

Hauraki, the chief, was dead ;
And the young wife he had wed,
And his sister, wove the cord
That would take them to their lord.
Hauraki, untimely slain !
They must go to him again.
As they wove the rope, Regret,
In their hands the flax was wet.

Given by the gods on high
Death a Maori asked to die—
Killed by one of equal rank—
Ere into the fern he sank
He his slayer's soul had hurled
Shrieking to the Underworld.
Not unheralded he came :
Death, a-shudder, knew his name !

While in turn each warrior said
Solemn farewell to the dead,
And the wailing rose and sank,
Lone upon the river-bank,

THE STRANGLING CORD

In the twin strands of the rope
Twisting sorrow, twisting Hope,
These slain women wove and wove
The last necklace of their love.

E! across the *rauho* swamp
Stepped the young moon in his pomp!
And they saw him as they spun—
Marama, the new-born one
Who to Death must fade away,
Yet whom Death can never slay:
From the grave's eternal birth
Marama comes back to earth.

"Well it is, O Moon, for you!"
Grieved the girl-wife, "born anew,
Slim as a young child! But men
Come not back to earth again.
Hauraki has gone afar;
You have dimmed, perchance, his star!
E! if mortals had your boon
Well it is for you, O Moon!

"All unomened, dead he lies:
Not a star swept from the skies;
Not a *tohunga** could tell
He should fall—and yet he fell.

* Priest.

THE STRANGLING CORD

Not a soothsayer could warn
He must leave his tribe forlorn.
E! young Moon that comes again,
Well for you . . . and woe for men!"

To the darkness where they wept
From the *pa†* an old chief stepped,
And a warrior snatched the strands
From the women's weaving hands.
"It is time," the young wife said ;
But within her bosom dead
Deep she felt a new grief stir
As they brought her babe to her.

"Hauraki within Death's gate,"
Spoke the chief, "must lonely wait
Till our tribe's revenge is made
And the last blood-payment paid.
More our vengeance than your grief ;
Live, and make your child a chief
Who shall lead us down to take
Utu‡ for his father's sake!"

"*E!*" the mother cried, "O Moon,
Mortals, too, have won your boon!
Hauraki, the chief, the slain,
In my babe comes back again!

† Village.

‡ Payment.

THE STRANGLING CORD

Out of Death as out of Birth
Hauraki comes back to earth!"
To her breast she took the child,
And with Life was reconciled.

Puhihuia

I.

Like the first word of Spring, the loveliness
Of Puhihuia thrilled the wakening world ;
And through the hearts of chiefs and warriors swept
The rumor of her beauty like the breeze
That burdens summer nights with dumb unrest.

Like blundering moths about the evening fire
The young chiefs followed her with blinded eyes
As in the dance, lithe as a flickering flame,
Slim Puhihuia swayed, and saw them not.

And, by the legend of her beauty stilled,
To that fierce land of tribal feuds there came
A dreaming pause: the old hates smouldered down ;
Forgotten in the glamour of her face,
Ungluttled went the hoarded vengeance
For ancient slights ; and murders slowly planned
Through long resentful generations died.
The patient weapon, fashioned through long years
For one red blow, fell, unbesmeared—a gift
At Puhihuia's feet ; and silently
Peace lay like evening on the adoring land.

PUHIHUIA

So, wasted by the wonder of one face,
The whole land drowsing lay ; and chief on chief
Up to Mount Eden questing for the hand
Of Puhihuia came, and one by one
Were moths to her slim torch, and blinded went
With maimed and dragging wing out to the night.

But Ponga dared not lift his eyes to her ;
For to his heart came restless whisperings
Of a remembered beauty not of earth . . .
Some dim, indelible, forgotten face
That brooded over him in the wakeful nights,
A faint and piteous form that from the dark
Leaned out with dumbly questioning eyes, and with
Soft, reminiscent fingers stirred his hair.

But when the *rata* opulently robed
The bush in scarlet, and the sisterhood
Of Mata-riki, the wan Pleiades,
Leaned down to the warmed earth, and all the crops
Were dug and stored, the chiefs of Awhitu
Piled high their war canoe with precious gifts
For Puhihuia, and with pomp of slaves
And warriors to Mount Eden proudly swept
To storm her untamed heart. And in his place,
Lowly among the lowly of the tribe,
With niggard store of scented oils, scant plumes,
And tarnished *huia*-feathers, Ponga crouched,
Rich only with the spendthrift dreams of youth.

PUHIHUIA

Then with grave welcome of slow-waving ferns,
With wailing ritual of old chants, wherein
Hovered in faint and wavering cadences
Dim inarticulate griefs of ancient time,
The haughty maidens of Mount Eden *pa*
Gave greeting to these gallants come to woo.

That evening, after feast and *korero*,
The maidens of the *pa* come forth to dance.

But in that wave of swaying grace one form,
One face, one loveliness thrilled every heart.
For Puhihuia dancing made the rest
Seem stone, grotesque, rude as the carven gods
Stolidly staring on the pallisades.

Like saplings leaning to a dying breeze,
Like the young moon upon the uneasy waves,
Like in the trance of evening the thin spear
Of wavering smoke when first the fire is lit,
Like glossy sunlight laughing on the flax,
Like the red ripple of the dawn, like Love
Startled and apprehensive, strangely born
In a maid's eyes, slim Puhihuia danced.

And every stubborn heart was humbly hers;
While she knew nothing but the dreaming joy,
The grave delight of dancing, ever dancing

And Ponga, lowly in his place, looked up
 And saw the cruelty of dreams come true.
 For, veiled within the wonder of one girl—
 Smooth rippling curves, nude limbs of swaying brown,
 And soul deep-drowned beneath the unstirred pool
 Of musing, unawakened maidenhood—
 That faint remembered beauty not of earth,
 That dim, indelible, forgotten face,
 Vaguely recaptured, mistily enshrined,
 Smote him like sunrise!

Lo, the Spring-time born
 Of that long winter of his waiting heart,
 The goddess by his desperate dreams allured
 Wondering to earth! But, ah! a goddess still,
 Immured from mortal yearning, strange to sighs,
 Kin to the mist, widowed of some great star!

The dance died into stillness like a wind
 Quietened by nightfall, and the maidens sank
 Softly to earth. Then the impatient chiefs
 Of Awhitu, flinging their mats aside
 And grasping *merës*, to the war-dance sprang—
 A wave of frothing terror thundering down
 Upon the smooth, reverberant beach of night.
 And on the breaking billow Ponga rode,
 Triumphant foam.

PUIHUIA

The princess, chin on thumb,
Marked him and wondered . . . and with swift hand
 sought
To stay this new, unknown, bewildered heart,
This strange soft wonder of a wounded bird
Caged moaning in her bosom. For she loved.

But when the war-dance ceased she did not rise
And sit by him she hungered for. In rank
He was beneath her. Could the imperial moon
Lean down to a mere mortal? So she went,
A goddess humbled with a woman's heart,
Proudly unto her peers and sat that night
Silent with the great chiefs of Awhitu.

And in the kindlier night, as Ponga lay
Wide-eyed and watched the hours, out from the dark
That faint, remembered beauty not of earth,
That dim, indelible, forgotten face,
Looked down upon him, perilously near.

He waked his slave and whispered, "Let us go ;
Death is not such a cruel thing as Love :
Death comes if desperately wooed. But, ah !
To plead with Puihuia before I go,
To ask those eyes if they dare look on me
Who, abject, yet a man, greatly aspires
To love her !"

And the wise slave subtly smiled,
Whispered a hope, and went into the night.

E! Ponga's voice across the silence, "Slave,
I thirst! Bring water!" In his hiding-place
The wise slave listened. Ponga's voice again;
And still no stir, no answer. Then he cried,
"What, must I rise and kill this drowsy slave?
I'll send his slave-soul to the Underworld.
By morn the carrion flies shall cloud on him!"

Cold answer made the silence.

Then arose
The maiden's mother, touched her sleepless child,
And said, "Some guest is thirsty. 'Tis not well
Because his slave is deaf a guest should thirst.
You know the narrow pathway to the spring:
Go, fetch him water."

And the girl arose,
Stilled her swift-hurrying heart—that strange new
heart
That had, these long, long hours, slain all the hosts
Of sleep—and taking torch and calabash,
And timorously singing as she went
To fright the goblin things that haunt the dark,
Leant blindly to the brimming spring, and swept
With impious hand the drowning stars away,
Filling her calabash . . . and rising, saw
Ponga in silence watching.

PUHIHUIA

“You!” she breathed,
“Why have you come?” And he, “I was athirst.”
“Then drink!” And he, “Ah, no! It is my heart
That thirsts!”

And by the pool brimming with stars
They stood and gazed—and Ponga slaked his thirst.

II.

As one by one the chiefs of Awhitu
 Laid at her feet their gifts, the young girl laughed
 Compassionately, as Ina of the moon
 Laughs down when her strange-mouthing worshipper,
 Prone in blind reverence, with his clumsy waves
 Gropes as with inchoate, brutish hands to reach
 Her far, white-shining feet. For now she dwelt
 A goddess in a land strangely remote,
 Moving in memories of Hawa-iki—
 That dim, sea-drowned ancestral Paradise
 Whence her young race in giant canoes had come,
 With impious daring sweeping the ocean's verge
 For virgin isles, unravished continents.
 So, dreaming back to Hawa-iki, she knew
 How in the rosy morning of the world
 Her eyes and his had met and interchanged
 Swift tremulous parleys of remembering souls. . . .

They brought her gifts, who had to fill her heart
 The stealthy largesse of his tenderness—
 Caresses soft as children's whisperings
 And adorations that would die in words.
 (Her beauty had made him a babe to chide,
 And yet not mock too much; for he could crush
 Deliciously the laughter out of her!)

PUIHUIA

They brought her gifts, who had the all of life—
The breathless wonder of their stolen nights.
So with a little mouth of mockery,
That pained her heart deliciously—not him,
She took up Ponga's presents—draggled plumes
And scant and niggard store of scented oils—
And laughed, "These only do I deign to keep;
These of your gifts to me are worthiest!"

The wounded chiefs laughed sourly at the scorn
The girl had made of Ponga; so in him,
The lowliest, she mocked all Awhitu!

The morrow as they left Mount Eden *pa*
The chieftainess and all her maidens passed
The pallisades and chattered down to say
Their last farewell.

(And Ponga's wise old slave,
Sent by his master secretly at night
To make all ready for the tribe's return,
Sat on the beach beside the launched canoe.)

And Puhihuia and her mocking maid
Strayed further and yet further from the *pa*;
Till suddenly the conch-shell called them home.

Reluctantly the maidens turned. But, *e!*
Slim Puhihuia leapt to Ponga's side,

PUHIHUIA

And suddenly the two began to run
Like drifting feathers on the scurrying wind;
And, startled, all the tribe of Awhitu
Unknowing followed.

Then, within the *pa*
The great war-trumpet wailed, and frenzied men,
Snatching swift weapons, angrily buzzed out
To rescue Puhihuia. It was war!

Long-smouldering feuds licked suddenly to flame.
The *merë* that men's lives had wasted out
In patient sharpening should be polished now
In blood. Grim *utu* should be made for this
Last insult of these arrogant Awhitu!
The war-cry thundered. *E!* 'twas death—and life!

The runners reached the sands, and their canoe,
Lashed forward by a hundred foaming blades,
Leapt out in flight. The steersman turned and saw
His foes rave impotent upon the beach,
Their war-canoes dismantled, useless logs.
Some comer in the night had done this thing;
And—for a space—the Awhitu were free.

(And at his paddle straining, the wise slave
Smiled secretly, and from his dim eyes flashed
The triumph of a chief.)

PUHIHUIA

But as they sped,
Ika, their chief, to Puhihuia turned.
This strange wild bird that laughed at all his lures
Had fluttered, maimed, into his open hand!
He closed it on her, softly, greedily.

But Puhihuia rose. "I and my heart
Have chosen for ourselves a lord to serve;"
And, stepping from her place upon the prow,
Humbly among the lowly rowers' ranks
Beside her husband crouched.

And so they came—
A swift canoe urged on by unguessed fears,
Deep-burdened with new jealousies and hates—
To Tiki-tai—a little crescent moon
Of yellow sand asleep in azure sea.

All Awhitu had come to welcome home
These love-maurauders. *E!* the prize was theirs!
But why was she not splendid on the prow?
The women's "*Heremai!*" died down. The tribe
Upon the beach in stoic wonder stood.

One word from Ika, and the lean canoe
Came quivering to rest, and Ika spoke.
"Here she of sacred rank, the chieftainess
Of Eden, snared by Ponga's low-born love,
Demands a home. This is a theft so great
That all our lives for *utu* must be paid;

PUHHUIA

And Ponga dies the murderer of his tribe.
For who dare stand against the *taua** vast
That comes to wipe away such sacrilege?
To-morrow, like the *moa*, Awhitu
Will be but a lost name!"

Down to the wave
With lifted *merë* strode an ancient chief.
"Back to her people send that chieftainess!
Shall we, then, for a little breath of love,
Brief as the dew and melting like the mist,
Break ancient bonds of peace? Why should to us
One woman's fragile loveliness be death,
And beauty trample brave men into dust?
This land is mine. So, back!"

The young girl rose
Beside her lord, and, quietly casting down
Her mat of sacred feathers, stood erect
In all her slim, lithe, naked loveliness.
"O, people, look at me!" she cried, and stretched
Passionate arms out to the watching shore.
Tall, with dark curling hair and sun-tanned skin,
And supple as a sapling of the bush,
Of her young beauty arrogantly sure,
Naked she stood. "O, people, look on me!"

And from the tribe arose and slowly died
A moan of admiration.

* War party.

PUHIHUIA

“Are you just
To be against me angered? Folded wings,
Into the lure I dropped ; but yours the snare
Baited with Ponga's beauty. 'Tis a plot,
Cunningly laid, to murder me !”

She leapt
And swam to shallow water. Threateningly
The old chief raised his *merē* ; but she stood,
Knee-deep, a glistening loveliness, and laughed.
“ Yours is the land ; but Love no foothold needs ;
For us there is old Ocean's kindliness,
And Marama shall find us in the foam
Of cold sea-surges happily asleep.”

She turned and found that Ponga thigh-deep stood
Behind her, with her garments in his hands.

The old chief pondered ; then he spoke. “Oh, you,
Pure loveliness, have chosen, and I choose
That which my daughter chooses ; and my tribe
Shall be your tribe, and your death-place be mine ;
And *utu* for your beauty shall be paid
Till there are no more men of Awhitu !
For when the wind of Love blows through the world
Men's lives like shrivelled leaves into the dust
Are shaken down—and still the wind sings on !
And beauty to her careless triumph goes
Upon a pathway strewn with broken things
Like youth and bravery and pride and war.

PUIHUUA

A smiling woman takes the lives of men
And breaks them, and they in their writhings laugh—
Too great the joy of giving to weigh out
The greatness of the gift!"

And, wading through
The waves, the old chief gravely put on her
His sacred mat, and drew her to his land.

III

At morn the lovers from a towering cliff
Watched the swift onrush of their foes' canoe ;
And Puhihuia looked the last time on her love,
And hand in hand they leaned upon the verge,
Ready to leap to death.

But who were these,
No warriors, but womankind like men
Grotesquely armed?

The lovers to the beach
Came wondering, and Puhihuia gave
Curt greeting to the women of her tribe
So strangely come as foes, and at their head,
Armed like a chief, her mother!

"Are your chiefs
Afraid of one already slain by Love?
Or do they seek to tame a woman's heart
By the soft treachery of women's tears?
Nay, I have chosen Ponga, and with him
What matters it if I have chosen death?"

PUHIHUIA

"This is a woman's war," her mother spoke.
"For always in our tribe the women made
The seeking and the choice. No word save Love's
Could move my ancestors and me—beneath
The menace of my brother's bitter hate
I took my lord. For when we women love
Our hearts are very sure; and all the world
Dare not divide us from our hearts' desire.
I know my daughter, and she knows her heart.
For what have women in this world to do
But love, and what our business but the trade
Of bearing children that shall grow up chiefs?
Men can but kill; but how can they subdue
That sullen rebel—woman's passionate heart?
They wage their wars, but women finish them;
They slay, but we, recalcitrant, bring life.
My daughter's heart has like her mother's dared.
And like all women she to it is true.
This is a woman's war."

So on the beach,
While Ponga with his mat over his head
Sat blinded, that he should not see her slain,
Naked and singly Puhihuia fought
Three women of her tribe, and slew the three.

So, satisfied by this blood-payment made,
Her mother and her people went in peace.
And Puhihuia with her lover lived
And made his tribe her own, until one day

PUHIHUIA

Her husband went out hunting to the North
(The path that dead souls take!) and came not back.

And Puhihuia took her little son
Into the unknown North to seek for him,
And came not back.

So in the tangled maze
Of gloomy forests of the unknown North
Ponga and she grope blindly through the dark,
Each other ever seeking. So they stray
Through shadowed gorges, down the gullies call,
And on some lonely lake, lost, secretive,
Still as the night, they let a ripple loose.
And through the drowsy afternoons, when all
The birds are dead, they speak each others' names,
And question hurrying creeks and ask the ferns,
And wonder over the answers in their dreams:
So, lured by that sleek traitor we call Love,
Somewhere within the fastness of the North
The three drive deeper, deeper from the day.

So in the unknown forests of the North
These lovers seek each other as they sought
In that red-misted morning of the world;
So down from life to life eternally
They seek, and strangely find, and as they clasp
Are mocking shadows melting back to night.

PUHIHUIA

So through the tangled forest of this world,
Strangely bewildered, stumbling through the shade.
With doubts and bruises, soilures and despairs,
And sudden tear-dimmed glimpses of the sun,
Blindly, eternally soul seeks out soul,
Forever finding and forever lost.

Ma-Riko-Riko: The First Woman

'There were gods and shadows only
In the ghost-land, Hawa-iki;
Laughterless the world and lonely,
And disconsolate was 'Tiki.

Heaven with changeless joy was sated;
'Tired with gladness, dead earth under
For a pulse of passion waited,
For a soul to yearn and wonder.

Long the god in sorrow wandered
Through his world of melancholy;
What was lacking?—so he pondered:
E! he had forgotten Folly!

By the first of rivers, golden
"Daughter-of-the-Many-Faces,"
Tiki incantations olden
Made with wondrous woven paces;

And of sand a handful taking
Moulded it to something human—
'Tiki chanting in the making
Of the twilight-soul of Woman!

MA-RIKO-RIKO: THE FIRST WOMAN

But it wanted yet some leaven,
Sacred ochre for adorning;
So from out the ruddy heaven
Tiki filched the glow of morning.

E! the form with red blood flushing,
Wakened love its beauty clothing!
To the lips the color rushing
Ebbed . . . and left them lips of loathing!

Motionless the statue waited,
Beautiful—but he had blundered;
He had but a corpse created,
Perfect, pulseless. Tiki wondered . .

E! the tropic heat a-shimmer!
Tiki, swift the sunshine taking,
Saw a flush of passion glimmer
In those misty child-eyes waking.

Beautiful, elate, full-blooded
Stood the form, and it was human,
Sun-gleams, gold of morning flooded
Through her earthiness—a Woman!

E! but all too frail to cherish,
Beautiful a moment only,
She—so soft a thing—would perish
And the world once more be lonely.

Nay, she should give birth to others ;
She, herself, herself should fashion ;
He would mould a race of mothers,
Handing on the torch of passion.

But in vain he tried, and, troubled
Cursed its sterile grace ; but, after,
Soft his curses were redoubled—
Echo echoed endless laughter !

Quick the voices Tiki blended,
And was done with his endeavour ;
Though in death the singer ended,
Still her song would echo ever.

So, at last, he called and claimed her ;
She was whole and wholly human.
He Ma-riko-riko named her—
“Twilight”—twilit soul of Woman !

The Path of Souls

With Death behind me with his goad—
Soon I must go the last, last road—
That narrow, dreary, twilight track,
Where, drifting slowly, yearning back,
Between two worlds our souls must go,
With slinking lizards green to show
The way to dim Te Reinga!

Then I shall feel the breezes die,
And all the land in silence lie,
And lean in loneliness to hear
The waterfalls speak words of cheer;
But they shall slip without a sigh,
And shuddering creeks creep noiseless by
Till I shall reach Te Reinga.

Silent, without a breath or moan,
Yet knowing I am not alone,
I, in my place in that long line,
Shall find, perchance, some human sign,
Shall see the lightly trodden grass
Where all unseen the shadows pass
Their way to lone Te Reinga.

THE PATH OF SOULS

And in the ranks of marching dead
The narrow, twilight path I tread,
And see where half-remembering lingers
Some spirit lone, with futile fingers
Tying a knot of waving grass
To show the way that I must pass
 To Night and dark Te Reinga.

And I, in turn, shall pause and clutch
The living grass with lingering touch
And leave the message of a knot
That I may not be all forgot
By those who, desolate and dumb
Must come the road that I have come
 To Life's Last Door, Te Reinga.

Till I wait, shrinking from the Black,
On Haumu—"Hill-of-Looking-Back,"
To gaze once on the world I know,
The world of sunlight, ere I go
To that stark cliff that glooms ahead,
The piteous pathway of the Dead,
 The Gate of Souls, Te Reinga.

Where steep to the hushed sea it slopes
One crooked tree, the *aka*, gropes
With shrivelled fingers toward the realms
That Tangaroa overwhelms
With his slow-heaving world of waves—
A land of Nothingness and graves,
 The Farewell Place, Te Reinga.

THE PATH OF SOULS

And I shall watch where gently sways
The patch of kelp that overlays
The doorway like a curtain grim—
Hell's doorway to the Regions Dim;
But I dare not delay o'ermuch:
For soft I feel the clammy touch
Of souls that crave Te Reinga.

And so one last look I shall give
To all these green things that may live
When I no more may see the sky;
Then with shut lips, no moan nor cry,
But as a warrior who has won
His last fight when all wars are done —
Shall leap from grim Te Reinga.

A warrior who has won—and failed—
Yet still the Crooked Gods assailed,
And beaten down by doubt and pain,
Triumphant rose to fail again,
Contented now to leave behind
A knot of grass for friends to find
When they, too, seek Te Reinga!

**Verses of the Dominion and the
Commonwealth**



The Dwellings of Our Dead

They lie unwatched, in waste and vacant places,
In sombre bush or wind-swept tussock spaces,
Where seldom human tread
And never human trace is—
The dwellings of our dead.

No insolence of stone is o'er them builded ;
By mockery of monuments unshielded,
Far on the unfenced plain
Forgotten graves have yielded
Dust unto dust again.

Above their crypts no air with incense reeling,
No chant of choir nor sob of organ pealing,
But ever over them
The evening breezes kneeling
Whisper a requiem.

For some the margeless plain where no one passes,
Save where at morning far in misty masses
The drifting flock appears.
Lo, here the greener grasses
Show like a stain of tears!

THE DWELLINGS OF OUR DEAD

For some the bush, where, all its sadness scorning,
The cassocked *tui* his sleek coat adorning

High on his pulpit-tree,
Enraptured of the morning,
Hymns liquid minstrelsy.

For some the gully where, in whispers tender,
The flax-blades mourn and murmur, and the slender

White ranks of *toë* go
With drooping plumes of splendor
In pageantry of woe.

For some the common trench, where, lost and fameless,
They fighting fell who thought to tame the tameless,

And to their rest went down:
One long grave holds them nameless—
Brave white and braver brown.

But in their sleep, like troubled children turning,
A memory of home within them burning,

They whisper their despair,
And one vague, voiceless yearning
Burdens the pausing air:

“Unchanging here the drab year onward presses;
No Spring comes trysting here with new-loosed tresses,

And never may the years
Win Autumn’s dear caresses—
Her leaves that fall like tears.

THE DWELLINGS OF OUR DEAD

"And we would lie 'neath old-remembered beeches,
Where we might hear the voice of him who preaches
And the deep organ's call,
While close about us reaches
The cool, grey, lichen'd wall."

But they are ours, and jealously we hold them ;
Within our children's ranks we have enrolled them,
And till the world-soul cease
Our brooding bush shall fold them
In her broad-bosomed peace.

They came as lovers come, all else forsaking,
The bonds of home and kindred breaking ;
They lie in splendor lone—
The nation of their making
Their everlasting throne.

Written in Australia

The wide sun stares without a cloud :
Whipped by his glances truculent
The earth lies quivering and cowed.
My heart is hot with discontent :
I hate this haggard continent.

*But over the loping leagues of sea
A lone land calls to her children free
My own land holding her arms to me—
But oh, the long loping leagues of sea.*

The grey old city is dumb with heat ;
No breeze comes leaping, naked, rude,
Adown the narrow, high-walled street ;
Upon the night thick perfumes brood :
The evening oozes lassitude.

But over the edges of my town,
Swept in a tide that ne'er abates,
The riotous breezes tumble down ;
My heart looks home, looks home where waits
The Windy City of the Straits !

WRITTEN IN AUSTRALIA

The land lies desolate and stripped ;
Across its waste has thinly strayed
A tattered host of eucalypt
From whose gaunt uniform is made
A ragged penury of shade.

But over my isles the forest drew
A mantle thick—save where a peak
Shows his grim teeth a-snarl—and through
The filtered coolness creek and creek,
Tangled in ferns, in whispers speak.

And there the placid great lakes are ;
And brimming rivers proudly force
Their ice-cold tides. Here, like a scar,
Dry-lipped, a withered watercourse
Crawls from a long-forgotten source.

My glance, home-gazing, scarce discerns
This listless girl, in whose dark hair
A starry red hibiscus burns ;
Her pallid cheeks are like a pair
Of nuns, bloom-ravished, yet so fair.

And like a sin her warm lips flame
In her wan face ; swift passions brim
In those brown eyes too soft for blame ;
Her form is sinuous and slim—
That lyric line of breast and limb !

WRITTEN IN AUSTRALIA

But one there waits whose brown face glows,
Whose cheeks with Winter's kisses smart—
The flushing petals of a rose.
Of earth and sun she is a part;
Her brow is Greek and Greek her heart.

At love she laughs a faint disdain;
Her heart no weakly one to charm;
Robust and fragrant as the rain,
The dark bush soothed her with his balm,
The mountains gave her of their calm.

Her fresh young figure, lithe and tall,
Her radiant eyes, her brow benign,
She is the peerless queen of all—
The maid, the country, that I shrine
In this far-banished heart of mine!

*And over the loping leagues of green
A lone land waits with a hope serene—
My own land calls like a prisoner queen—
But oh, the long loping leagues between!*

Sydney

In her grey majesty of ancient stone
She queens it proudly, though the sun's caress
Her piteous cheeks, ravished of bloom, confess,
And her dark eyes his bridegroom-glance have known.
Robed in her flowing parks, serene, alone,
She fronts the East ; and with the tropic stress
Her smooth brow ripples into weariness ;
Yet hers the sea for footstool, and for throne
A continent predestined. Round her trails
The turbid squalor of her streets, and dim
Into the dark heat-haze her domes flow up ;
Her long lean fingers, with their grey old nails
Giving her thirsty lips to the cool brim
Of the bronze beauty of her harbor's cup.

From a Cremorne Balcony

The moon that drifts the world around
Two pleasaunces of peace has found
Where she her steps is fain to stay:
Once when she dreams an hour away
In the lagoons of Venice drowned,
Once when she trails in childish play
Her silver robes in Mosman Bay!

And then the bay is made anew.
Upon the bush—a blur of blue—
The glad moon waits with widened eyes
To watch where lighted Musgrave tries
The smooth floor with a jewelled shoe.
There may be beauty past the skies:
My balcony is Paradise!

Moon-maddened, creaking through the night,
A locust shrills his thin affright;
A murmur from an unseen boat
Where lovers drowned in longing float
Upon the sea of their delight;
And from the further shore, remote,
The laughter from a woman's throat.

FROM A CREMORNE BALCONY

The lapping waves soft secrets tell ;
Even an anchored steamer's bell
Comes liquid, hushed, as in a swoon.
So still it is, that surely soon
Out from the bush, to break the spell,
Will sneak, as down a blue lagoon.
A gondola beneath the moon !

Upon her torch-lit path afloat
A red bacchante ferry-boat !
And, where the picture seems to lack,
A skiff drifts by—a blot of black.
Poised like a butterfly, that note
Etched on the moonlight's silver track !—
Enough to call our Whistler back !

A Spring Sonnet

Last night beneath the mockery of the moon
I heard the sudden startled whisperings
Of wakened birds settling their restless wings ;
The North-east brought its word of gladness, "Soon!"
And all the night with wonder was a-swoon.
A soul had breathed into long-dreaming things ;
Some unseen hand hovered above the strings :
Some cosmic chord had set the earth in tune.

And when I rose I saw the Bay arrayed
In her grey robe against the coming heat.
A pulse awoke within the stirring street—
The wattle-gold upon the pavements thrown,
And through the quiet of the colonnade
The smoky perfume of boronia blown!

The Australian

Once more this Autumn-earth is ripe,
Parturient of another type.

While with the Past old nations merge
His foot is on the Future's verge.

They watch him, as they huddle, pent,
Striding a spacious continent,

Above the level desert's marge
Looming in his aloofness large.

No flower with fragile sweetness graced—
A lank weed wrestling with the waste;

Pallid of face and gaunt of limb,
The sweetness withered out of him;

Sombre, indomitable, wan,
The juices dried, the glad youth gone.

A little weary from his birth,
His laugh the spectre of a mirth,

Bitter beneath a bitter sky,
To Nature he has no reply.

Wanton, perhaps, and cruel. Yes,
Is not his sun more merciless?

So drab and neutral is his day,
He finds a splendor in the grey,

And from his life's monotony
He draws a dreary melody.

When earth so poor a banquet makes
His pleasures at a gulp he takes ;

The feast is his to the last crumb :
Drink while he can . . . the drought will come.

His heart a sudden tropic flower,
He loves and loathes within an hour.

Yet you who by the pools abide,
Judge not the man who swerves aside ;

He sees beyond your hazy fears ;
He roads the desert of the years ;

Rearing his cities in the sand,
He builds where even God has banned ;

THE AUSTRALIAN

With green a continent he crowns,
And stars a wilderness with towns;

With paths the distances he snares:
His gyves of steel the great plain wears.

A child who takes a world for toy,
To build a nation or destroy,

His childish features frozen stern,
His manhood's task he has to learn—

From feeble tribes to federate
One white and peace-encompassed State.

But if there be no goal to reach? . . .
The track lies open, dawns beseech!

Enough that he lay down his load
A little further on the road.

So, toward undreamt-of destinies
He slouches down the centuries.

“One Hour—to Arm!”

Along the frontier of our North
The yellow lightning shudders forth;
 But we have shut our eyes.
Yet in the tropic stillness warm
We hear the mutter of the storm
 That all too soon must rise!
After the flash the thunder comes,
And now the menace of the drums
 Wakens this pregnant calm.
Prolong this hush of warning, Lord,
That we have time to clutch the sword:
 Grant us one hour—to arm!

O God, bear not our sins in mind:
We have been foolish, little, blind—
 But we were children then.
We dreamed within a childish heart
That we could play in peace apart
 Amid a world of men!
Now we have glimpsed our looming fate,
Hold back Thy hand, ere 'tis too late

"ONE HOUR—TO ARM!"

To shield our own from harm!
Within us loud our manhood calls,
Before Thy bolt of terror falls,
Grant us an hour—to arm!

Lord, in this lull before the break
Of Thy wide tempest, let us make
Our ramparts round complete,
With noise of rivets, whirr of wheels,
And waters hissing 'neath the keels
Of our star-guerdoned fleet!
With workshops fashioning our might,
With bugles singing through the night
In city and in farm;
The steady drill, the hammered din,
The quiet heart of discipline—
Grant us our hour—to arm!

Then each shall take with stubborn grip
His rifle as he took his whip,
And when the Flag 's unfurled,
The clerk shall drop his futile pen
To lift his well-loved lance—and then
A nation fronts the world!
Each dread and desperate and White,
Each trained from youth like Youth to fight,
Ready without a qualm
To spill his blood as sweat he spilt,
To save the home himself had built—
Grant us that hour—to arm!

“ONE HOUR—TO ARM!”

So on that Judgment Day of Fate
Each mother proud will dedicate
Her son his land to save;
And with no tear will let him go
To camp or submarine—although
She knows 'tis to his grave.
And though Death grimly takes her gift,
Above her son's lone grave shall lift
That Cross to bring her balm!
That she may see, Lord, in the night
Our Stars triumphant, steady, White,
Grant us the hour—to arm!

The Coming of Pan

"The great god, Pan, is dead!"
That low voice that despairing cried
Among the reeds complaining, lied.
Not Pan, his worshippers had died;
And he in horror fled
The silence grim that seemed to hold
The dedicated forests old,
Glades nymph-deserted, altars cold.

Pan fled; and blatant Rome
Met him with formal eulogies.
Stout senators, intent to please,
Embalmed him in their bald decrees,
Gaunt temples for his home.
But when the Goth contemptuous came
And flung this ruined world to flame,
He found Pan not, nor knew his name.

Pan waited till there broke
A sudden Spring renascent, proud;
For Italy had cast her shroud
And blazed in splendor: trumpets loud

THE COMING OF PAN

His sullen silence woke.
He leapt to keep with Youth his tryst,
But found cathedrals tall sufficed;
And he was crowded out by Christ.

Then sombrely he went
World-wandering, an outcast lone.
The Gothic fane had overgrown
The woodland temple he had known:
Life's joy was drained and spent.
For to this world of wan and thin
Hypocrisy had entered in
A cowed and monk-like thing called Sin.

And now his world grew small:
Where once shy rustic joy had birth
Grey cities festered on the earth;
The only temples in that dearth
Were factory chimneys tall;
No echoes in drab suburbs woke;
There were no dryads to evoke;
The world was clogged with drifted smoke.

He hungered for release,
And south and south and south he went,
Till suddenly he laughed content,
Reaching the last lone continent,
A larger, sun-laved Greece—
Steep gullies snowed with wattle-gold.
Vast bronzen eucalypti old,
White beaches where white breakers rolled!

THE COMING OF PAN

Triumphantly he trod;
To sunny glades he shouting skipped,
And out from their grey eucalypt
The joyous wakened dryads slipped
To frolic with their god.
He blew his pipes along the sand,
And to him rippled sea-nymphs, tanned
With sunshine—surely this his land!

And sacred was each stream:
He found his altars in the shade—
White tents set up in every glade—
And many a wistful mortal maid
In thrall of some old dream;
Along the beaches white he found
His throngs of devotees, the browned
Sun-worshippers—'twas holy ground!

And loud his pipes he blew,
And crowding to his gladness came
The Austral poets to proclaim
Their new god's ever-swelling fame,
And lead his retinue.
These people were a people freed
From narrow church and coffined creed,
And Pan's old gospel their new need.

Had he no heralds? Nay,
In Araluen Kendall set
His lone Greek shrine—'tis standing yet—
And Daley's fane none may forget;

THE COMING OF PAN

And Morton and McCrae
Lead in the god's glad throng the van,
Brave music fluting . . . If I can,
Let me, too, breathe thy pipes, God Pan!

Envoi: Little England

From a little island shrouded
 In the sea-fog of the north,
From a tiny cottage crowded
 Her brood of boys came forth.

She shook off their embraces
 And she hurried them away ;
To the world's forgotten places
 She sent them out to play.

"I have work to do, at present,"
 She laughed. They raced from sight.
But they found their play-grounds pleasant,
 And they came not home at night.

For they met new fates and chances
 And they felt new hopes to urge,
And they found their own romances
 On the waste lands of the Verge.

While she—too proud to mourn them—
 Who had set their feet to roam,
The mother who had borne them,
 Bided desolate at home.

ENVOI: LITTLE ENGLAND

But, at last, with a sudden yearning
Her children's hearts were filled ;
And the mother saw returning
Her truant sons self-willed.

They came ; and the dim eyes brightened
As they leapt the garden wall ;
But she shrank, with a gladness frightened :
Her babes had grown so tall !

And her aching heart besought them,
And her eyes were blind with tears,
As, trembling, their toys she brought them
She had treasured through the years.

But they struck her with men's laughter
At the playthings she had kept ;
And they kissed her close—but, after,
They went—though they knew she wept.

No more might that cottage hold them ;
It had shrunken strangely small ;
Though the mother's arms would enfold them,
And her heart had room for all !

So they went—with a passing sadness
And a foot for a moment stayed ;
But they turned to their work with gladness
In the new worlds they had made.

ENVOI: LITTLE ENGLAND

The door gapes on rusty hinges,
And the mothering eyes are dim;
But her sons are out on the Fringes,
Patrolling their Empire's Rim.

For their hopes are wider, other,
And they grow not young again.
Still she waits her babes—the mother:
But they come back bearded men!



Lyrics



To You

So you have come at last!

And we nestle, each in each,
As leans the pliant sea in the clean-curved limbs of her
lover, the beach;

Merged in each other quite,
Clinging, as in the tresses of trees dallies the troubadour
Night;

Faint as a perfume, sweet as wine,
Yielding as moonlight—mine, all mine:
So I have found you at last!

I dreamed: we dare not meet:

The time is yet too soon.
Swept with the tumult of our great love, our souls from
this life would swoon.

For the fusion of our lives
Is the one far goal to which the vast creation vaguely
drives;

And only when I kiss your face
Shall the final trumpet shatter Space.
I dreamed: we dare not meet.

Yet somewhere, hungry-eyed,
You wait and listen with tears,

TO YOU

Clogged with the flesh and dulled with the sodden heritage of the years.

And I am distant, lone,
Hedged with the palisades of Self, shut in—a soul unknown.

You, fashioned for me from Time's first day,
I, made for you ere that dawn was grey,
Wait, hidden and hungry-eyed.

I lie in the lonely night.

And you? Perhaps so near
That if I should whisper your sweet soul-name you would
thrill and wake and hear!

And yet perchance so far,
Drowned in the cosmic mist beyond the swirl of the
farthest star.

But over the frozen void between
With wistful eyes you wait and lean,
Alone in the lonely night.

Perhaps your passionate arms

Some stranger-youth entwine;
And you will yield him thin, faint kisses, thinking his
lips are mine;

He, dreaming that unawares
He has caught, as once in a dream he caught, that
miracle-glance of hers.

For each the piteous thing that seems—
Each clasping memories, clasping dreams
In lax and widowed arms.

TO YOU

Or, starving and craving still,
To your soul you were bravely true;
You told the Night your secret dream, and he laughed
back at you.
And even in your sleep
His laughter woke you, and you could not even the dear
dream keep;
Till Age kissed you with a kiss that sears,
And you faded and withered with the years,
A-hungered and craving still.

But hush! I had almost heard!
Last night I dreamed your name:
Beneficent like a white, cool cloud to my desolate sky
it came!
Like a moth it drifted away,
And into the flame of the dawn it fluttered, dying into
the day.
Yet the wind in the whispering leaves
The voice of your sobbing weaves—
Hush! I had almost heard!

Yet I should know your face.
As mine, all mine, I claim
That coil of hair that over you smoulders like a golden
flame,
And the strange, dim-curtained eyes,
The crescent of your imperious chin, and the little moist
mouth that cries.

TO YOU

Your voice, with its tincture of tears,
I have heard through a thousand years . . .
Yes, I remember your face.

Once in a drifting crowd
I thought I had found a clue:
A pale face pealed like an organ-note, and yet—oh, my
heart!—not you!
She had your look, the same
Grave gladness of a child's young eyes; but all the rest
was shame.
Perhaps she saw—for her eyes were wet —
In me the soul she had one time met
In eternity's drifting crowd.

Perhaps 'tis the desert of years
That severs each from each;
And out of the cavernous centuries to each other we
blindly reach.
You blossomed so long ago
That only the dawn and the Spring remember—and little,
so little, they know!
You wait on the hill of the first white morn,
Straining dead eyes to me, unborn,
Across the desert of years.

Or when I am dead, at last,
And my sovereignty have won,
As, merged in the dust of the gradual Past, unliving, I
yet live on
You will rise with some far-off Spring,

TO YOU

And back to the old dead days that were mine your
piteous glance will fling.

But, hush! I shall come in the rain-kissed night
And whisper the words of our marriage-rite—
We shall find each other at last!

Yet if we met . . .

I dreamed: we dare not meet. . . .

Lament

Peace, your little child is dead :

Peace, I cannot weep with you ;
I have no more tears to shed ;
I have mourned my baby, too—
I, that ne'er was wooed nor wed.

Love has looked within your eyes,
Love has filled your hungry heart ;
You have borne your babe, your prize,
You have blossomed, done your part,
Though the flower faded lies.

But to me was love denied—
God had said it might not be.
Still my hungry hopes abide :
All the motherhood in me
Aches—and starves, unsatisfied.

How my soul has yearned for thee,
Sweet, sweet unborn child of mine !
How thy life would tenderly
Round thy mother's life entwine—
Hope of hopes that may not be !

LAMENT

How thy hands would pluck my breast!

I have felt them o'er and o'er,

And thy flower-soft skin caressed,

Baby mine I never bore!

Did I dream so? . . . Dreams are best.

You have nothing now to fear,

Mother, you have fondled him,

Held his pretty face so near,

Laid your lips to each wee limb:

He is dead, but he was dear.

You have something you may mourn,

Some warm memory to kiss;

I am lonelier, more forlorn;

God has given me but this—

My sweet babe that was not born.

After Long Years

"And have I changed?" she asked ; and, as she spoke,
The old smile o'er her pale face bravely broke,
And wintry sunlight in her dead eyes woke.

Changed? When I knew again the ghost of each
Remembered trick of gesture, manner, speech,
And felt the beauty that no years could reach!

"I will go back with you without regret ;
For not one word you spoke I dare forget,
And with each kiss of yours I tremble yet!"

"No ; you have taken your way : I took mine.
A word may not our severed lives entwine,
Nor will a kiss the shattered years combine!"

She put her arms about me, held me near ;
Then forward to her lonely path and drear
She turned her blossomed face, without a tear.

The Spinster

The house is strangely silent. Are my little children
sleeping?

Was that the patter of bare feet adown the staircase
creeping?

It is the knocking of my heart, its lonely vigil keeping!

The house is strangely lonely. Hush! was that a voice
beseeching?

One of my dears left in the dark, with frightened arms
out-reaching?

*It is the grey years slinking past, and I have learnt their
teaching!*

The house is strangely tidy. Not a toy discarded lying;
No tracks of muddy boots despite a foolish mother's
prying.

And at my bosom hungrily those feeble voices crying!

The house so big and empty! Are the naughty frolics
hiding?

What was that, soft upon my cheek—a baby's kiss con-
fiding?

*My cheek is wet, but not with kisses. Heart, oh,
cease your chiding!*

Loneliness

She put her arms about me, as the sea
Puts arms about the earth ;
With her great pitying love she sheltered me—
And I, with bitter mirth
Laughed secretly, and slipped—she did not guess!—
From her embrace, and stole
Into my silent world of loneliness
Where I must meet my soul.

I took her close and made her wholly mine,
And she looked up, content ;
And while I gave God thanks, without a sign
Forth from my arms she went—
Drowned deep beyond the reach of my caress
(Even as her kiss I felt!)
To hells and deeper hells of loneliness
Where she had ever dwelt!

Came one dread day when in her laughing eyes
I caught a frightened flame
That lit in mine the terrible surmise
That neither dared to name:

LONELINESS

In lonely graves, whereon the long years press,
We each lie confined deep ;
'Neath swathe and heavier swathe of loneliness
Our souls their secrets keep !

The Unborn

I dwell a temple-dusk within ;
 I still the tremors of my heart ;
'The world with all its haste and din
Swims by, remote and slow and dim.
 I am a vessel placed apart,
With the rich wine of life a-brim.

Greatly serene, with even breath
 I live aloof, my yearnings dumb.
I have grown strange to life and death.
My husband has gone far from me ;
 And all my body has become
A mute and hushed expectancy.

And he—the man-child I shall bear—
 He must be strong ; so I am strong.
(This arrogant soul that I prepare !)
My weakness every hour I slay.
 He shall be pure and hate the wrong ;
So I—this untamed claw-thing—pray !

In twilit peace I brood and wait.
 I have put from me griefs and fears ;
I have forgotten what is hate ;

THE UNBORN

And love too fierce a flame may be.

Only sometimes the uncalled tears
Flood all the courage out of me.

My anger in a leash I take ;

For I have died and now am part
Of this sweet blossom soon to wake.
With drugging faith my thoughts I drown ;
And in my unrepentant heart
This night I crush the rebel down !

My passions are like breezes spent

That on the twilight's bosom die ;
And I am still and reverent.
And yet the task ! Ah, God, how can
This broken melting meekness, I,
Bring forth the splendor of a Man ?

Chance

So it seems, looking back, as if Chance did all,
That the scroll was not written beyond recall

Long ere we knew,
That our love was not part of a pattern planned ;
Blind Chance but lifted a listless hand,
And gave me you.

As I stood, so it seemed, on the beach of Night,
Some soft thing, wonderful, helpless, white,
Passively sweet,
Meek spoil that the somnolent ocean gave,
Chance-flung on a dead, chance-lifted wave,
Lay at my feet.

No! Destiny marked us each for each.
Fate flung you, helpless, within my reach ;
But I was wise.
This strange sea-wrack before me thrown
I might have passed, unknowing, unknown,
With blinded eyes.

But did I not in the Infinite
Some soft thing, wonderful, glimmering white,
Strangely discern?

CHANCE

And did not you, in the far ocean-drift,
To the shore where I waited your eyes uplift,
And toward me yearn?

Was it careless Chance that drew my feet
Beneath the low moon your soul to meet
By the ocean's rim?
I had always dreamed of you, lost, alone,
And, but half-recalled, I had always known
A secret dim. . . .

And somewhere afar, or perilous-near,
Your low voice calling I seemed to hear—
But, ah! your name?
Yet I knew that this loneliness was not all,
And eternally craved; and at last my call
You heard—and came!

For in lives long dead I knew your eyes.
My love is but that I recognise,
Remembering.
And I could wait—as in lives before—
Till the loyal years to me once more
Your soul would bring.

Thus, thus, I remember your dark eyes shone!
In the twilight-time of the ages gone
Did our love begin.
On no hazardous currents of aimless seas,
But the long sure surge of the centuries,
You drifted in!

Bereft

For nine drear nights my darling has been dead ;
And ah, dear God ! I cannot dream of her !

Now I shall see her always lying white—
A frozen flower beneath a snow of flowers,
Drowned in a sea of fragrance. I shall hear
In every silence of the years that wait
Only the muffled horror from the room
Where I had left my little child asleep—
And found a nameless thing shut in and sealed.
And no more shall I know her kiss: the thick
Dead perfume of slow-drooping flowers has drawn
A veil across my memory . . . She is dead:
For nine drear nights I have not dreamed of her.

When, all a tangle of wee clambering limbs,
And little gusts of laughter and of tears,
Sun-flecked and shadow-stricken every hour,
She played about me, I could lie all night
And dream of her. She came, a wistful thing,
That yielded up her soul of love to me
With kisses tenderer and words more sweet
Than that mad, random vehemence of love

BEREFT

She lavished on me through her laughing day.
And now she has been dead nine weary nights:
And ah, dear God! I cannot dream of her!

Her idle hoop is hung against the wall,
And in the dusk her empty garments seem
As if still warmed with her impetuous life.
And here the childish story that she wrote
Herself and never finished. How one day
With puzzled pucker of her brow she stopped
Mid-sentence, as if God had gravely held
A finger up to hush her, and she knew
She was to keep His secrets—soon, ah, soon!—
Perhaps he whispered low, she would know all.

And now she has been dead nine long blank nights:
And ah, dear God! I cannot dream of her!

So I shall see her always lying white—
A frozen flower beneath a snow of flowers,
Drowned in a sea of fragrance. Now it seems
As if the memories I hold of her
Had shrivelled with the lilies that she loved
And lay with on her little narrow bed—
So piteously tidy!—those two days. . . .
And once, and more than once, I thought she moved.

And now she will not murmur through my dreams
Those unknown words that mean in dreams so much,
And wither with the morn. I lie awake
And whisper to my heart, "To-night I'll hear

BEREFT

Her petulant hands knock at my dreams' shut gate—
And oh, the gladness when I let her in!
Hush! what a patter of impatient feet
Down the long staircase of the dark! And then
I sleep, and with an endless weariness
I grope among the spaces of the dark
For rhythm of her unresting feet, or touch
Of her caressing fingers, or the kiss
Of wilful-shaken curls against my cheek.
And there is nothing but the empty night.
And when I wake again I see her yet,
So pitifully thin and chill and straight,
Who used to be all curves—a living flame.

For nine black nights my darling has been dead,
And till I die I cannot dream of her!

Perhaps she aches to come, shut in her grave —
So deep to dig for such a little thing!
Dear God! she is too frail and small to climb
The horror of those walls that hedge her in.
Or if you helped her little frozen feet
To struggle through the silence to Your throne,
Ah, let her slip some evening down to me:
She is not happy there without her toys.

So I have called and called. . . . She does not come.
And yet I know the way into my heart
She has not quite forgotten. . . . She does not come.
And now for nine dead nights she has been dead:
And ah, dear God! I cannot dream of her!

A Pair of Lovers in the Street

A pair of lovers in the street!
I dare not mock: with reverence meet
My unforgetting heart I cheat.

Ah, God, spare me—so soon again
At the barred door to beat again in vain,
And find their dalliance such fierce pain!

I, yearning up from Hell's abyss,
See, dreaming through their worlds of bliss,
This Dante and his Beatrice!

For these the distant goal have won
For which God made the plasm and sun:
His patient laboring is done.

For these each Spring has been a bride,
And lonely worlds were spawned and died.
Chaos for them in birth-throes cried.

Far out in seas of Space forlorn
This crescent wave was slowly born
That thunders on the beach of morn.

A PAIR OF LOVERS IN THE STREET

Ah, they, so soon to be meshed in
The web of splendor, silken-thin,
The nebulæ were set to spin!

Up the long path from joy to joy
Love led the way. Can aught destroy
The task that was the stars' employ?

Their ecstasy to God is more
Than Lucifer at Heaven's door
Entreating pardon for his war.

These two are gods, for, by love swayed,
They have God's special task essayed,
And new worlds for their gladness made.

This little hour so lightly given
Makes earth too mean a place to live in,
And broken toys His Hell and Heaven.

All Time, expectant of their bliss,
Hangs fearful. Space through her abyss
Shudders if they this hour should miss.

For if their kiss they went without,
The stars would be a raining rout,
And Time in anguish flicker out.

About God's room from star to sun
A stealthy slippered Thing would run,
Quenching cold tapers one by one.

A PAIR OF LOVERS IN THE STREET

But they have kissed. Eternity,
Like a great clock, beats steadily
For these mazed fools—but not for me!

Of God's wide universe the strands
They hold within their clinging hands:
The stars march on at their commands.

So from this moment blossom free
New universes tirelessly—
Aeons of unguessed ecstasy!

But I can only bow and beat
Vain hands about God's mercy-seat,
And, still remembering, still entreat.

Surely my penance is complete!
The rack turns grimly when I meet
A pair of lovers on the street.

The Pleiades

Last night I saw the Pleiades again,
Faint as a drift of steam
From some tall chimney-stack ;
And I remembered you as you were then :
Awoke dead worlds of dream,
And Time turned slowly back.

I saw the Pleiades through branches bare,
And close to mine your face
Soft glowing in the dark ;
For Youth and Hope and Love and You were there
At our dear trysting-place
In that bleak London park.

And as we kissed the Pleiades looked down
From their immeasurable
Aloofness in cold Space.
Do you remember how a last leaf brown
Between us flickering fell
Soft on your upturned face?

Last night I saw the Pleiades again,
Here in the alien South,
Where no leaves fade at all ;

THE PLEIADES

And I remembered you as you were then,
And felt upon my mouth
Your leaf-light kisses fall!

The Pleiades remember and look down
On me made old with grief,
Who then a young god stood,
When you—now lost and trampled by the Town,
A lone wind-driven leaf,—
Were young and sweet and good!

Recognition

Swift was our glance as a stab,
Meeting and severing thus—
You flashing past in a cab,
I on the top of a bus.

So I have found you at last.
This moment opened a door
Flooding our souls with the Past:
So—I have known you before!

You are the woman I sought
Age after age tirelessly;
Fierce to possess you we fought—
All the dead egos in me.

As in those lives far removed,
Once more our pathways have crossed.
Yours the one soul that I loved,
Longed for and reached for . . . and lost!

You are the same. I recall
All the desire and the strife;
You are the one in them all
I have loved life after life.

RECOGNITION

Lost you, I treasured your lips,
Ever remembered your eyes.
Death after death might eclipse:
I with each dawn recognise.

So that I know you are you,
Choose you so surely from all.
You have remembered me, too:
Your new self strives to recall. . . .

Swift that old hunger for you
Woke in me unreconciled;
And in that moment I knew,
And in that moment you smiled!

For, though our loving the grave
Closed in forgetfulness, yet
Keepsakes, mementoes you gave,
Trusting I should not forget,

Till I am but as a scroll
Telling an old tale anew,
All this rich garment, my soul,
Patterned with memories of you.

Aeons ago we first met.
Till in star-splendor we mate
Aeons must fade and forget,
Drowsing Eternity wait.

RECOGNITION

And in those long years aloof
Lives upon lives yet must run,
Till I, the warp, you, the woof,
Richly are woven in one.

So, though the time may be late
When we together are brought,
These two are masters of Fate—
He who seeks, she who is sought.

And in that future, at last,
I shall remember you thus—
You in a cab drifting past,
I on the top of a bus.

Nostalgia

I hate the bitter brilliance of the day ;
For with the patient night I go apart,
And shutting eagerly the sun away,
I look in Memory's cold eyes of grey—
And I am back in London—with my heart.

And yet a shadowed fantasy does seem
That bleak Embankment where one night we kissed.
Was that slow-writhing river Lethe's stream,
Where dead souls shivered on a shore of dream—
That night we walked in Chelsea with the mist?

And was it real, that winter evening's tramp,
Or but a story tiresomely retold,
When you held out your fingers in the damp
To warm them at a watchman's midnight camp? . . .
Ah, little fingers now for ever cold!

Your laugh is but an echo faintly heard ;
Your moon-white face I never more can see.
By misty veils my longing eyes are blurred :
For now between us walks a silent Third
In London—you and I . . . and Memory!

Never

Though, love, you are not any more with me,
Nor with the sun—nor ever more may be,
Though Summer picked you with his other flowers,
And the young grass lies nearer to the showers,
Yet we two stole, before you went away,
 One gold hour from the grey.

But that hour, too, is dead: above it all
The weight of Time lies close—a shrouding pall.
All the dead years of all eternity
Can draw your outstretched hands no nearer me:
None of the sterile Summers that will flower
 Can give us back our hour!

And if in other worlds, in other guise,
We yet may meet, we may not recognise.
Ah, nevermore in all the width of Space
To catch one glimpse of your forgotten face!
Ah, never, in a thousand lives of pain
 To find that hour again!

A Woman's Farewell

So with this farewell kiss I taste at last
The all of life. The Future and the Past
Upon your dear lips dwell.
Love will not come again, though I implore;
And in my heart a twilight evermore—
Farewell!

A man's heart is so wide that I was wrong
To dream that I could fill it with the song
A woman loves so well.
A woman's heart is narrow, but I filled
Mine brimming with your kisses—none was spilled.
Farewell!

So fierce your love was, I was half-afraid.
The roses blossom and the roses fade;
The withered petals tell!
So high into your heart you lifted me,
So far I have to fall, since it must be
Farewell!

Now all the world I fashioned round me falls;
And from the past one memory calls and calls,
Slow-grieving, like a knell.

A WOMAN'S FAREWELL

Now all the days like drear regrets shall seem,
And all the nights—the nights! . . . I dare not dream!

Farewell!

But what if I can hold you, hold you yet
Till all else but my lips you must forget? . . .

If love could but compel!

But all the whispering hopes our hearts have heard
Must droop and wither to this sullen word—

Farewell!

My love was like a little child to me;
Now in my breast 'tis crying piteously—

Hush, dear! all will be well!

My lips on yours for ever! Say again

You love me—though it be not true—and then . . .

Farewell!

Sonnets



The Pacific

They ring her round like gods who watch a game
Of mimic boats upon a sheltered pond.
The round arena each has coldly conned,
And from his city gazes, keen to claim
The mastery of oceans and the fame
That waits in the immediate Beyond.
Will it be ancient yellow, brown or blond
To write upon its waves his deathless name?

All for this Armageddon breathless wait:
Dumb Russia stretches one vast frozen paw,
And he who lately nipped it stands elate;
Sydney and San Francisco crave their share;
Samoa threatens—but within his lair
The dreaming saurian lifts a listless claw!

China (1899)

She lies, a grave disdain all her defence,
Too imperturbable for scorn. She hears
Only the murmur of the thronging years
That thunder slowly on her shores immense
And ebb away in moaning impotence.
Giants enduring, she and Time are peers—
Her dream-hazed eyes knowing no hopes, no tears,
Her glance a langor-lidded insolence.

And though the rabble of the restless West
In her deserted courts set their rash sway,
She heeds them not ; as when the sun, withdrawn
From his untarnished sky, knows it distressed
By storm of weakling stars, that he at dawn
Will wither with one ruthless glance away.

Balzac

I peered down at the world that Balzac made,
And watched the mannikins that from his brain
He, god-like, plucked ; and for me once again
The tiny simulacra worked and played,
Trafficking busily at love or trade,
Then one by one were married or were slain ;
And as I mused, the colors seemed to wane ;
The type grew blurred, the world began to fade.

I shut the book ; and fearfully I said :
"What if this world wherein we live and die
Were but a *Human Comedy* some Mind
Had made and published, wherewith—having dined—
Some Reader might make a dull hour go by . . .
And He who wrote the volume . . . dead—long dead?"

Reincarnation

"How flowers flaunt their immortality
At us!" you broke to wistful laughing speech,
That morning as we strolled, bending to each
Frail loveliness. "They'll greet next Spring, but we—!
One Spring shall bourgeon that we shall not see,
When these pale blossoms that their sermon preach
Will grow too tall for our cold hands to reach.
Ah, love, that we should perish utterly!"

No; in some later and some lovelier age
I shall discover, 'neath the dust, this page,
And idly read these uncouth verses through
(Writ by some stranger centuries ago),
And wonder, startled, why they thrill me so,
And, half-remembering, lift my eyes—to You!

The New Woman

The stone that all the sullen centuries,
With sluggish hands and massive fingers rude,
Against the sepulchre of womanhood
Had sternly held, she has thrust back with ease,
And stands, superbly arrogant, the keys
Of knowledge in her hand, won by a mood
Of daring, in her beauty flaunting nude,
Eager to drain Life's wine unto the lees.

So she shall tempt and touch and try and taste ;
And in the wrestle of the world shall lose
Her dimpled prettiness, her petals bruise ;
But, moulding ever to a truer type,
She shall return to man, no more abased—
His final mate, a woman, rounded, ripe.

Night in England

A silence like a night-mist from the ground
Floods all the sodden fields. London lies there—
A hundred miles beyond that hill-side bare—
Its fever ended in a peace profound,
Still as this stagnant village that is drowned
In immemorial quiet. High in air
The street-lamps of a greater city flare:
But of its tireless traffic not a sound!

And yet a measured music marks the time:
Charging a culvert on its distant flight,
An unknown train comes roaring up the night;
And over all dead England, from dark towers
Village to village calling, chime to chime,
The empty churches tell the empty hours.

The Labourer

Athwart this cityful of little men
He moves in his slow, sullen, clumsy might—
A creature from the centuries of Night,
A primal thing from out the darkness when
Mind writhed in birth-pangs, come to earth again!
Huge bestial jaw, pent brows, and arms to smite—
The pick in his crude hands a toy as slight
As in the fingers of a clerk his pen.

Yet as he slinks, drink-soddened, he may see
Once more in that shut obstinate brain the day
When he was lord by right of thews, and we,
With craven souls and flaccid limbs unhinged—
Unmuscled slaves beneath his savage sway—
Without a snarl, abject and fawning, cringed!

Nemesis

All things must fade. There is for cities tall
The same to-morrow as for daffodils:
Time's wind, that casts the seed, the petal spills.
Grim London's ruined arches yet shall fall
Back to the arms of Earth. A quiet pall
The mother draws o'er those she loves—and kills;
And though brief nations vaunt their upstart wills,
The nemesis of grass shall cover all.

So—from a caravan to Mecca bound
Getting no more than one incurious glance—
Tremendous Babylon, thrice-girt with walls,
Sick of her thousand years of arrogance,
With a few tamarisks upon a mound
Her epitaph upon the desert scrawls.

Personal

I.

(What recompense is there these latter days
For one who from the common highway turns,
Drawn by a star that in the cold sky burns
Superbly inaccessible, in ways
Doubtful and unfamiliar craving praise,
Approval, sympathy? Too late he learns
There is for him who the broad highway spurns
From foes their hate, from friends a slow amaze.

What recompense these hostile days, but this:
An inward certitude, a soul assured,
A heart serene, of need of solace cured?
And Life gave me, this bitter dearth to flout,
This craven heart that with a Judas-kiss
Nightly betrays me to the swords of Doubt!)

II.

(When I have vanquished bitter hours like these,
And from Life's sunny afternoon look back;
When from the high plateaux of Age I track
My groping path 'mid the uncertainties
Of this grey-shrouded morn; though my soul sees
The mists still lying, they shall richly lack
The darker tints—rose-shot that dreadful black!—
Time shall have honeyed all those memories.

But what regrets for you who stood apart
And might have helped!—and now it is too late—
Whose long indifference hurt more than hate:
'The friend beneath the critic slowly quelled.
Ah, could you wipe from your remembering heart
The deaf, importuned door, the hand withheld! . . .)

Lovers

I thought, because we had been friends so long,
That I knew all your dear lips dared intend
Before they dawned to speech. Our thoughts would blend,
I dreamed, like memories that faintly throng.
Your voice dwelt in me like an olden song.
Petal, methought, from petal I could rend
The blossom of your soul, and at the end
Find still the same sweet fragrance.—I was wrong.

Last evening in our eyes love brimmed to birth ;
Our friendship faded, lost in passion's mist.
We had been strangers only ! Here, close-caught
Against my heart the dim face I had sought
So long ! And now the only thing on earth—
Your piteous mouth, a-tremble to be kissed !

To One Slain in Absence

And so we parted, love, oblivious
That we were parting. With our laughter light
Flouting the future, on the morrow bright
At our old tryst we would once more discuss
The wonder of our love miraculous ;
While even then Fate waited, swift to smite.
So you have gone, large-eyed, across the Night,
And I stand straining widowed arms! Yet, thus
I want your memory—no tears, no pain,
No presage of chill Death, nor any fears ;
Your wide glance bridging all eternity
With quiet faith. Is't not an augury
That somewhere in the tangle of the years
Your laughter and your lips I'll find again?

The Star Sonnets



The Stars

The terrible tranquillity of Space!
My soul shrinks back in sudden doubt. I fear
The myriad eyes that through the ether peer,
And chill the arrogance that dared to trace
The grave enigma of the cosmic face.
Yet through the soundless night a voice austere:
"We that you deem afar are small and near;
With lowly things and humble we have place.

"We are but smoke that from a burnt past rears;
Or idle spray God's prow flings in its sweep
Through wider waters; or mere dust that curls
From his vast chariot-wheels as on He whirls;
The futile sparks that from His anvil leap;
Or drifting seeds, pregnant of larger spheres."

Life

This careless spilth of Life upon the earth,
This spendthrift largesse ceaselessly among
The welter of the star-mists lightly flung,
This futile iteration, death to birth,
And life and love to death—what is its worth?
Why has to restless, troubling being sprung
This mould upon a little ball of dung?
Is it not matter for our bitter mirth?

Life's efflorescence doomed to its brief day
May be a wild and unwatched garden place,
With here and there some trivial blossom bright,
Forgotten in the desert of cold Space,
Whereon some unseen Presence, some still night,
May musing gaze, and, gladdened, go his way.

Mars

Two lovers strolled beneath the spacious night;
And in the silver phalanx overhead
Glowed sombrely one sullen spear-point red—
Menacing Mars amid that host of white!
But only in each others' eyes made bright
By many dreams the lovers looked, nor read
The meaning of that bronzen portent dread:
What need have lovers' eyes for other light?

And yet in that enormous world of Mars
Two lovers once had dreamed as now they dreamed,
And died, and left of all their tears no trace
Save a dead globe by fissures strangely seamed—
A tomb whereon they wrote, for unborn stars,
Those few faint pencilled lines that challenge Space!

The Riddle

I stood beneath the Night's unmoved expanse.
And lo! upon the fallow darkness sown
Like seeds, the stars; or bright confetti thrown
Upon the dusty floor of circumstance;
Or hung, a jewelled necklace, to enhance
The throat of Night! And to some Power unknown
I cried, "Is Man then but a mote alone
Caught in a falling rain-drop—dust of Chance?"

Yet in the desert of this sterile Space
A living moss upon a crumbling clod
Tenacious finds a brief abiding-place:
An Insignificance that has its dream—
A mind that reads a meaning in the scheme—
A heart whose craving dares create a God!

The Audience

Upon the lighted platform, ill or well,
The actor plays his part. His soul lies bare—
A quivering thing beneath the limelight's glare.
Beyond him glooms the void ; he cannot tell
Whether he charms or is despised, nor spell
The meaning of that wide impassive stare,
Nor dream the verdict that the minds declare
Of that great gazing sea invisible!

So man may play his trivial part, nor guess
The unimaginable hosts that peer
Remotely at him, and each gesture mark,
The critic-minds that in a mood austere
Judge him, the verdict, silent, passionless,
Of cynic eyes unseen within the dark.



Interrogations



The Hucksters

To a world that cringes to the strong
In vain have we craved and pleaded ;
Through a world that is sick for the need of a song
Move the Makers of Song, unheeded !
So ever among you we wander thus,
By your long indifference saddened,
So little our fellows take heed of us,
That even your frown has gladdened.
Ah! proud, indeed, of a laughing taunt,
Our piteous trade we ply,
Crying the wares you do not want,
The wares you will not buy!

Like ghosts dismayed on an alien shore,
Waiting till Death has freed them,
Ghosts who have forgotten the kindly door
That back into Death would lead them,
With our glittering merchandise of dream
We throng in the public places ;
And you that impatiently past us stream,
Move on with averted faces.
With hair long grey, with features gaunt,
And lips too weary to sigh,
We cry the wares you do not want,
The wares you will not buy!

THE HUCKSTERS

We have drugs of hope that will drown your care,
Ambitions a new life bringing,
Bland salves of faith for a soul's despair;
For the tired a song-bird's singing;
We have lies for sale that are finer than truth,
And wistful and wonderful sorrows,
And miracle-passions, and madness, and youth,
And distant, impossible morrows.
And ever your market-places we haunt,
And you have for us no reply,
Crying the wares you do not want,
The wares you will not buy!

Yet little we care that you are unkind,
So foolish and mean your derisions;
Ah! what of your wealth, you that were born blind,
Would you give for one of our visions?
Yet we from our dreams—as you from your gold—
Ah! nothing in life may wean us!
For each his lack or his vision must hold:
There may be no traffic between us!
So yet in spite of the wares you vaunt,
Our merchandise you would try—
We vainly crying the wares you want,
The wares that you may not buy!

The Weakling

I am a weakling. God, who made
The still, strong man, made also me.
The God who could the tiger plan,
In his lithe splendor unafraid—
A thing of flame and poetry—
That Puissance made of me—a Man!

The One who reared His vast design—
Star, atom, system, germ, and soul—
Could fashion forth this tremulous
And paltry little heart of mine!
The God who could conceive the Whole,
Himself blasphemed in building thus.

When I dare look the glass within,
The "Mene Tekel" mark I see.
God made this slinking, stunted thing,
This narrowed face, this futile chin,
Prisoned a soul deliberately
'Neath these blunt nerves unanswering?

I see my fellows strong and proud,
Lustful and splendid with desires,
Secure and strenuous within,

THE WEAKLING

God opulently them endowed,
And lit in them immortal fires;
And left me scarcely strength to sin.

I watch them triumph by, afar,
Crashing through life with crude disdain.
Theirs is a universe so wide,
So keen and rich the colors are
That reach each fine responsive brain.
They are the bridegrooms, Life the bride!

They carry in their veins their fate;
Foredoomed are they to victory.
Their broad brows are a diadem
Of mastery; they but await
Their long determined destiny,
For at their birth Life laurelled them.

They have their chance to win, to fall—
The fighting chance, the deathless hope;
Their fate they venture to assail;
They chafe for ever at their thrall;
They dare with their despair to cope
Superbly strive, superbly fail.

But I starve with a stunted brain:
My vision is so mean and scant
That every hue it blurs and dulls.
God branded me—this brow of Cain!—
Put in me this heart hesitant,
And lamed me with a limping pulse.

THE WEAKLING

I watch them striding on; they flout
Death even; then my path I see:
The narrow path—the narrow curse.
Ah, wonder, if I dare to doubt
If sin of mine prescribed for me
This mean and niggard universe?

The end that is upon my face
And in my wizened soul I wait—
The end that I shall count for good.
Yet they who pass me in the race
Left me to falter to my fate:
They did not slay me when they should.

But yet He found "that it was good."
Ah! surely in the soul of God
For me some kindly pity is?
Or else I wonder how He could
Raise me—a soul—up from the sod,
Lift me from Nothingness—to this!

Yet—thin weak lips and woman-chin—
Some unknown debt in me is paid,
Some sacrifice I may not see.
I expiate some other's sin.
I am God's weakling. He who made
The still, strong man, made also me.

A Song of Failure

Here is my hand to you, brother,
You of the ruck who have failed.
I, too, am only another
Fighter who faltered and quailed.
Now with my courage for token
Here to grim Fate I give tithe;
I, too, am beaten and broken,
Lying, the swath of the scythe.

We to the conqueror's seeming
Crouch, an incongruous horde—
Fighters, enmeshed in their dreaming,
Dreamers who girt on the sword,
Weaklings with sterile ambitions,
Heroes who learnt to succumb,
Poets a-swoon in their visions,
Singers with ecstasy dumb.

Failed! So we cast off our burden,
Done with our doubts and our fears:
These we have won for our guerdon—
Pity and tears—women's tears!
You with your conquests unending
Dwell from a woman apart;
Only the humble and bending
Learn the low door to her heart.

A SONG OF FAILURE

We that lie dumb in your scorning
 Made you the heroes you are,
Built you a road to the morning,
 Taught you to reach for a star;
We have had sight of the glory,
 Pointed it clear to the blind:
Yours is the grail-seekers' story,
 Ours is the vision you find.

Here is no dread and no grieving;
 Over us hurtles the fray:
Is yours a Heaven worth achieving,
 If it be stormed in a day?
Yet is the grail to us given:
 This is the guerdon we gain—
More is it worth to have striven
 Than in the end to attain.

The Unemployable (London)

Along the wide, incurious street
Moving with slow, incurious gaze,
With heavy hearts and heavy feet
Patrolling unfamiliar ways,
The hapless little pageant strays.

Marching in poor burlesque of might,
Yet silent, with no noise of drums,
With guardians left and guardians right
The sombre little army comes—
The sullen army of the slums.

Stirred vaguely from its sodden rest,
The ocean of the East we see
Against the bastions of the West
Breaking and ebbing hopelessly,
Wave after wave of misery.

Within their hearts there is no rage;
They are not human things. They share
With us no splendid heritage.
The years have slowly stripped them bare
Of hope and gladness . . . and despair.

THE UNEMPLOYABLE (LONDON)

No need to guard: they will not stir
Even to fight; they are ashamed
Of hope, for like a murderer
That would not kill, but slowly maimed,
Their souls Life ruthlessly has tamed.

You rulers forging phrases fine,
You poets dreaming of your art,
You preachers with your news divine,
Has in your scheme of things no part
This sickness in your city's heart?

You soldiers ever bringing in
New realms our Empire's name to know,
You tradesmen that new triumphs win,
What worth the conquests that you show,
When, unredressed, starves this long woe?

Ah! you who with a drunken pride
Push back your Empire's broadening shore,
Gathering nations to your wide
Freedom of rule, dare you ignore
This canker at your Empire's core?

Nay, who with these dead souls can cope?
Who will devise the hope to stem
The dull despair that does not hope?
Who will condemn not, but condemn
The gulf that stares 'tween us and them?

The Race

I am the Race.
Beyond your momentary view
My patient path I trace.
With even pace
I flow through you.

I am the Whole,
And you, the dumb, unconscious cell
That helps to build my soul.
I reach my goal;
You die. All 's well!

I bid you mate
And breed; by you my work is done.
My traps with love I bait,
And from birth's gate
I come—your son.

For when you wed
I force you to fulfil your doom.
Within your bridal bed
For me, long dead,
You must make room.

THE RACE

You are the mould
That for my purposes I make.
Me you a moment hold;
The shape, grown cold,
I lightly break.

And yet you cling
To something—call it Self—you 'd keep.
That perishable thing
Again I fling
Upon the heap.

So you aspire
To be yourself, but you breed true
To my unguessed desire.
And thus you sire
Myself—not you!

Though you may be
In my tumultuous song a note
One moment soaring free,
Eternally
I play by rote.

In my wide scheme
Beyond you my vast vision strays—
A bubble on my stream!
At my far dream
Through you I gaze.

The Sculptor

O'er the eastern hills of light,
While the dim world slept,
Dawn, the sculptor, stepped,
And the shapeless block of Night
Chiselled into form,
Morning-lit and warm.

The Coliseum

Over the Coliseum watched the moon
Like a forgotten lover who returns
Faded with years, and, still remembering,
Yearns from afar over a loveliness
Long faded, too.

So through the dying years
The wan old moon is drawn again to her
Whom once he loved, and drapes her in the grey
And silver of his memories; so through
All Time these two white things keep helpless tryst
And gaze and gaze blankly at a blank face,
And with a pang almost forgotten pass
Heedlessly into forgetfulness again.

Dumb as Eternity, Rome drowsed outside.
So many histories she had outwatched;
So many crimes and splendors folded down,
And underneath new ruins long forgot;
Over so many grandeurs slowly drawn
Her grey oblivion; and of Time so much
Had vaguely obliterated, that she slept,

THE COLISEUM

Sated and tired of empire, sick of sway,
Content among her palaces to dream,
Beneath her old, tremendous memories
 Bewitched, like drowned Atlantis, from the world.

And in the quiet of the Coliseum,
In that wide crater of dead passions—I,
In all my arrogant modernity!

Only the night lived there. Arch upon arch,
Tier over tier, the Coliseum seemed
Built of white silence, or a dream-thing drawn
From waning memories by the wizard-moon.

And on those quiet galleries that once
With the quick pulse of life had richly throbbed,
A throng of mute, incurious stars looked down;
And on the edge where once the sailors stood
To roof the universe with painted silk
A swirl of pigeons fluttered distantly.

And as I stood and watched, Antiquity
With all her centuries whirled in on me,
Like a swift ruthless rain! Within this pile
Of buried passions drowsed Eternity.
I felt Time like a weight that crushed me down
And held me breathless and impersonal.
Beneath that vast and pitiless regard
My frail modernity was stripped from me,
And I lay naked in the dust of Time.

THE COLISEUM

And all the years—impassive lookers-on—
Sat in their high seats, tier on tier, at gaze!

I knew I did not live—had never lived—
This transient life that jealously I called
My own, and clung to as a child her doll,
Draping it with a thousand splendid dreams.
For in my body dead souls stirred and waked;
And I was but the grave of unquiet ghosts
That moaned and wondered, twitched and stirred and
fought

And maimed and murdered endlessly. This soul
Was but the desolated battleground
For issues undecided, ancient feuds
Begotten in the ape, revenges vowed
Before my earliest self strangely erect
Stood balancing uncouthly. Centuries
On centuries of strife were summed in me.
What fierce vendettas cunningly bequeathed
Down the long generations snarling went!
And in this self were sometimes victories,
With their fierce slaughters and their fiercer paeans,
Sometimes defeats, despairs unmitigable—
But never silence, nightfall . . . never death!

And all the years—impassive arbiters—
Sat in their high seats, tier on tier, at gaze!

The Jew

Above the tide of Time he stands ;
The years flow at his feet.
Oblivion's restless, empty hands
Clutch at him, and retreat.
He sees new nations blossoming,
Abides their fading, too.
The centuries no mandate bring
The world-enduring Jew.

He sees the Gentiles sweep and surge
About their creeds and kings ;
He sees their shackled leaders urge
Their puerile party-things ;
He sees the great despoil the small,
He waits apart, resigned :
He knows himself the lord of all—
The Spoiler of his kind !

The petty little peoples flung
His tabernacle far ;
His sword no longer flamed among
The hosts whose pride is war.
You struck : he learnt the lesson grim ;
He winced—but he would win.
You scourged the weakness out of him,
And whipped endurance in.

THE JEW

You crushed him? No ; you but equipped
 With keener craft his hand.
The outcast that you stoned and stripped,
 The nationhood you banned,
Learnt how to cringe, not to succumb,
 Grew hard to taunt and sting,
Till on the cross of martyrdom
 You lifted him—your King!

And now the faiths are dead at last,
 And gold is more than men,
Out from the burrows of the Past
 He creeps to light again ;
And now his retribution nears,
 And now the tale is told,
And all the strokes of all the years
 Must be repaid—in gold.

For him your armies win—and lose :
 His toll he takes away.
The Jackal of the World can choose
 Disdainfully his prey.
He slinks about your trade, your wars ;
 His mouth is ripe to drain
The red wine of the conquerors—
 The red blood of the slain!

Blossom

Within a garden burned a rose—a quivering flame ;
But yesterday from out the bud it blindly came ;
And now an envious wind with itching fingers leant
And touched its lingering beauty ; and the petals went
 Upon the twilight tossing swift,
 Like little dusky boats adrift.

Then in the birth and doom of that brief rose I saw
The long unrolling of creation's ceaseless law.
All things are blossom ; and God thrilled at that flower's
 birth
As when from night-sheathed chaos broke this blossom-
 earth ;
 For God no large nor little knows :
 A universe slept in the rose.

The scattered star-mist that, dishevelled, trails through
 Space
Hears the low whisper of the Spring, and to its place
Whirls vastly, and its bulk with aching life is torn ;
And with a pang that shakes all Time a sun is born ;
 But God on it bestows the heed
 He gives to any wayside weed.

BLOSSOM

About it bloom the planets, like a pageantry
Of rival blossoms in a garden-galaxy.
They break and wane and wither, till, upon some earth,
Shrunk and chill and old, a pallid thing has birth;
 And on a world weary of strife
 Creeps forth this efflorescence, Life.

Strange vegetations fiercely bloom and fall from sight;
Monsters uncouth are spawned, and sink into the night;
Huge mountains blossom white beneath the ocean spray;
Vast tropics glow where once the glacier-ice held sway—
 Till, like a lichen on a stone,
 Comes Man, bearing a soul unknown.

The lichen spreads; and civilisations rise forlorn,
Bloom once, and, dying, blight the place where they
 were born.

Incomparable, unique, each in lone splendor burns;
Each bears one perfect grace that nevermore returns.
 Ah! gone is sculptured Egypt, gone
 The blossom that was Babylon!

The lotus of the East, the Grecian lily cold:
Each blossoms only one new beauty to unfold.
And this rich rose, the West, that opens now so vast,
Shall give its fragrance, then upon the night be cast.
 But still God scatters through the gloom
 New seeds whence nobler flowers shall bloom.

BLOSSOM

And æons rise and fade; and still the petal-years
Fall from the trembling stem of Time, that proudly rears
Space—like the last huge blossom of the far-thrown seed;
And Space itself shall wither like a trampled weed.

But in the void the Sower still
Scatters new seed, until—until . . .

The Yoked God

In that grey-shrouded morn of things when Life had
 birth,
And Time lay like a formless mist upon the earth,
 Man, new-created, trod
 Familiarly with God.

God hovered ever near us, swift in our defence.
If one soul dreamed of sin, from His omnipotence
 Solicitously leant
 The One Omnipotent!

For through the wonder of the night, the dawn's disguise,
We saw, clear-shining, kindly, God's benignant eyes :
 Our slightest woe had part
 In His great grieving heart.

God laughed and sorrowed with us : every human curse
Rang shrieking through a horror-stricken universe ;
 If one soul knelt to bless,
 Heaven blossomed happiness!

For us the fearful dark was lit, the sun was stayed.
By our quick tears and posturings all Space was swayed :
 Like seeds, for us alone,
 The suns were sparsely sown.

THE YOKED GOD

For He who dredged the void, and islanded with light
The vacant chaos, Who from out the sea of night
Drew up the wide star-shoal,
Thrilled at one contrite soul.

But now that Time grows grey, and surely God grows
old,
And Space is blank and blind and pitiless and cold,
Our Master has become
Remote and still and dumb.

Beaten and bruised by Life, no mercy intervenes;
No more in gracious pity from his Heaven He leans;
To us that are forgot
The wind he tempers not.

We analyse and probe, of mercy find no clue,
No trace of pity, and of love no residue.
In all this wide of Space
Of love—of love!—no trace!

We pray and whimper underneath the whip of Fate:
Death stays not for one moment his hap-hazard hate.
What worth, then, was our trust?
And is God merely just?

And hearts indomitable curse, blaspheme—in vain:
Back from the clanging void of Space our curses rain—
The One Omnipotent
Grown old and indolent!

THE YOKED GOD

But, no. He is not callous, not indifferent.
Man, and the God he made, are in one prison pent ;
Like us, the God of awe
Wedged in the grooves of law !

For now we see this palsied God, His great task done,
Caught in the cobwebs of the cosmos He has spun,
In greater forces held
Haplessly manacled.

And swift between us reaches a new sympathy.
The chains about our ankles bind us endlessly,
We twain moving in fright
Across a world of Might.

Caught in the wheels of Fate, what use for curse or
prayer?
The wheels will spare my soul—if they are set to spare ;
And me aside will brush—
If they are set to crush.

And so across the wastes of Night and Time and Space
These two faint pallid prisoners for ever pace,
Writhing beneath the rod—
Man yoked unto his God !

God and Supra-God

Long at his forge of the world
God labored on in the dark,
Till from his anvil was hurled,
Redly rebellious, a spark.
Clumsy, this blacksmith, and blind,
Hammering vaguely his plan,
Till from one stroke undesigned,
Forging, hap-hazard, a Mind
He had made possible—Man!

Still on his crude work intent,
Flaccid and feeble and old,
God on his groping way went,
Making and breaking each mould.
Uni-cell, starfish, and germ
Passed in and out of his dream;
Plesiosaurus and worm—
Each did its work for its term:
None of them finished his scheme.

But, 'mid the debris cast out,
Glowed the red eye of the spark:
Coming the old gods to flout,
Smouldering lone in the dark,

GOD AND SUPRA-GOD

Fiercely contemptuous, Man,
 Flung in his corner unseen,
His new creation began,
Took up God's clumsy old plan,
 Fashioned the wheel, the machine.

Slowly a new world took shape,
 Bettering God's dim design :
He was content with the grape ;
 Man found within it the wine.
God merely scattered the seed,
 Thankful his work was complete,
But from that chaos of weed
With his imperious need
 Man, the creator, brought wheat.

Giving his task with a sigh
 To this new god he had made,
God saw him build to the sky
 Triumphs he never essayed.
Having evolved him the horse,
 God drowsed again in his dream :
Man, with his worship of force,
Man, with his god-like resource,
 Multiplied it into steam.

Into God's chaos of pain
 Man strode, to build and complete ;
Made it with Justice more sane,
 Made it with Pity more sweet.

GOD AND SUPRA-GOD

Finding a world but half-hewed,
Lacking the kindlier half,
Into this universe crude
Came this divinity rude—
Man, who created the Laugh!

Man took his woman, a clod,
Lifted her up to his side;
Made her divine as a god,
Put in her chastity, pride.
Poets and troubadours long
Cunningly made her their theme,
Hymned her away from all wrong,
Till she became as their song,
Till she embodied their dream!

God was content with the ape—
That his mean climax, his goal.
Man took that bestial shape,
Made it divine with a soul.
So, with this soul to aspire,
Onward this Supra-God goes.
Which is the nobler, the higher—
God, who broke off at the briar:
Man, who created the rose?

The Truce

The long day is over, at last!
For, flying low over the field, the grey-pinioned twilight
has passed;
And softly behind him another—
Chill Death, his pallid-eyed brother—
Pale Death, who was once so proud, comes parleying for
peace.
His arrogant trumpets sound the Truce, and the strife
must cease:
The fighting is over, at last!

So long the battle has been—
A maze of blows uncertainly struck at foes unseen,
With swords about me beating,
With terrors and retreating.
All day the roar of the struggle has deafened me till
it appears
I have been in this warfare of life for endless monotonous
years—
So many the battles have been!

And it seems almost that I know
Dim visions of dawns that have smouldered and died long
ages ago;

THE TRUCE

And eternities full of the throbbing
Of battle; and wailing and sobbing:
The murmur of unbeaten hosts that contend through
æons I hear;
And into grey vistas of armies stealthily passing I peer;
And the faces are faces I know!

I had dreamed that my arm would prevail;
But this Self that I have to wear is an ill-fitting suit of
mail,
Whose heaviness hurts and confuses,
Aut cuts me and chafes me and bruises.
Ah, God! if the fight could be fought with the whole of
the strength of a man,
I would go down to death with pride, as a brave beaten
warrior can!

But how can my weakness prevail?

Uncouth is the armor I bear;
Caged in a body inert is a heart that is eager to dare.
Yet I smote with a sullen endeavor,
And if sometimes I felt my blade quiver,
I was glad, for I knew there were foes that even my
sword could reach.
But if there were given to each the task that was equal
to each,
And the burden that each could bear!

But the worst of the battle is here,
In this heart whose tenant was horror, this heart where
battered a fear.

THE TRUCE

A hero divinely dowered
Who is linked to a whimpering coward,
And locked in one Self to struggle for ever for mastery.
Ah, God! for the fight to be fought with the best of one's
being free,
And no horror of battle here!

Once I looked to the heavens on high;
But the smoke and the murk of the melley shut out the
peaks of the sky.
And I could not discern the Master:
He stood far aloof from disaster,
Serene on the peaks, while his armies moved to a far-
thought plan.
And what to him the smothered shriek of a death-stricken
man?
His gaze for the heavens on high!

Yet once the chance opened to me,
And I struck with a vivid gladness, struck with a sword
swinging free.
I knew one great moment of living;
Then I saw, and grew sick with misgiving;
For the hearts I had lacerated, the hearts where my hate
had found rest,
Were the hearts, the wounded hearts, of those I had
loved the best—
The hearts they had opened to me!

THE TRUCE

Yet fiercely and blindly I fought ;
And the far clear meaning, the goal of it all, never knew,
nor caught

One glimpse of the vision glorious
Of the hosts in their hour victorious.
Sore-stricken from every side—ah, wounded the worst by
those,
The comrades who fought at my side, and blundering
struck at my foes !

Yet this is my guerdon—I fought.

So little my arm could do,
I was content with the feeblest stroke ; for dimly I knew
In a field so harassed and harried,
Even the stroke that miscarried
Might clear the way for the great majestic hosts behind,
Might be the master-stroke from the first by the Master
designed—

So much my sword-arm might do !

But now the twilight has died,
I am proud to lie down in honored peace, sword at my
side.

A pause for silence and sleeping :
The Night has us in her keeping.
And lo ! I am still in the place where I stood in the eager
morn !
Our line has not won forward—nor yet was it backward
borne.

But, peace, for the twilight has died !

THE TRUCE

And tomorrow the onslaught again ;
Tomorrow and every tomorrow the fight indecisive and
vain.

Each purpose and poor endeavour

Repeated for ever and ever !

On the morrow the hosts—and I in their ranks—will
again engage,

And sheer through eternity the ceaseless warfare shall
rage—

The Truce—then the onslaught again !

The Need

When I am cold and stark,
When I into the dark
 Go groping, blind,
Then, lonely in the dread
Of dead among the dead,
Can I be comforted,
 Though God I find?

For in that shadow far
Where all things shadow are—
 That greyness drear—
I want no God unknown;
I need some spirit lone
Whose grief is like my own,
 Homely and near.

God dwells in loneliness.
To Him in my distress
 I cannot cling.
I ask no soul divine,
Remote, patient, benign,
But, ah! a heart like mine
 Remembering!

THE NEED

In that abyss I seek
Some humble thing and weak
 That faints and fears—
To meet in that lone place,
That is not Time nor Space,
Just this—a human face
 That has known tears.

And Yet. . . .

They drew him from the darkened room,
Where, swooning in a peace profound,
Beneath a heavy fragrance drowned,
Her white face flowered in the gloom.

Death smoothed from her each sordid trace
Of Life. At last he read the scroll;
For all the meaning of her soul
Blossomed upon her perfect face.

"In other worlds her soul finds scope;
Her spirit lives; she is not dead,"
In his dulled ear they said and said,
Suave-murmuring the ancient hope.

"You loved her; she was worthy love.
Think you her eager soul can cease?
Nay, she has ripened to release
From this bare earth, and waits above."

His brain their clamor heard aloof.
He, too, had said the self-same thing:
But now his heart was quivering
For more than comfort, parched for proof.

He put them from him. "Let me be.
You proffer in my bitter need
The coward comfort of a creed
That tears her soul apart from me.

"She waits in no drear heaven afar.
Her soul—how could you know its worth?—
Yearning for me, for homely earth,
No gates of beaten gold could bar.

"No; she is near me; ever close;
One with the world, but free again;
One with the breezes and the rain;
One with the mountain and the rose.

"She knows me not—her voice is dumb—
But aching through the twilight peers,
And, unremembering, yet with tears,
She strives to say she cannot come.

"Yes; she is changed, but not destroyed.
The words that were her soul are hushed;
The gem that was her heart is crushed—
Its fragrance white stars in the void.

"And I shall see her in disguise.
In the drear vistas of the street
A face that hints of her I meet:
Her soul looks out from alien eyes.

"In Time's great garden, Spring on Spring,
The blossoms glow ; then at a breath
Their petals flutter down to death—
Ah, love, how brief your blossoming!

"Death has but severed part from part.
Borne on an ever-moving air,
The fragrance of her life somewhere
Revives some lonely dying heart!

"No word of hers can God forget ;
Her laughter Time cannot disperse :
It shakes the tense-strung universe,
And with the chord it trembles yet.

"Each mood of hers, each fancy slight,
In deep pulsations, ring on ring,
Dilating, ever widening,
Ripples across the outer night.

"And in God's cosmic memory wise
Still live her subtle features thin,
Her dear iconoclastic chin,
The grave enigma of her eyes.

"And if beyond she might draw breath,
And know that I was not with her,
The wistful eyes of her despair
Would be more desolate than death.

AND YET . . .

"But not to meet her in the wide
Night-spaces I must wander through,
To kiss the pretty pout I knew,
And never more to hear her chide;

"To speak those childish words that were
So foolish-sweet, so passionate-wise,
Her subtle fragrance recognise,
And feel the kisses of her hair! . . .

"Her sun has set; but, still sublime,
She is a star, of God a part;
She is a petal at the heart
Of the eternal flower of Time.

"I triumph so beyond regret;
I win her immortality:
Where, Death, your vaunted victory?
Where, Grave, your sting? And yet . . and yet . . !"

Pause

These days I walk uncertainly ; for doubt
Like a thick fog trails over all the earth,
And men go mazed and staggering about,
And wonder at all things as little worth.

So short a while it is that from my sleep
I had awakened gladly ; now it seems
It had been better to have slumbered deep :
For I have trudged so far from all my dreams.

Ebbing and ever ebbing is faith's tide ;
The colors from the world are washed away.
Hardly ere dawn's first crimsonings have died
Comes disillusion, drenching life with grey.

Across the future mists drive desolate.
Why travail toward a goal that is not there?
No pathway beckons ; let us sit and wait,
Cumbered no more with hope, loosed from despair.

Yet though my world to nothingness has gone,
My weakness gives me strength this hour to flout ;
Blindly and sullenly I will go on,
Brow-down against the buffetings of doubt !

After

After the hapless struggle and the fret of life,
After desire and hope and yearning, grief and strife,
 Earth gives her sleep.
There will be no more dreaming and no more despair ;
I shall not even wonder, and there will be there
 No need to weep.

And Time his quiet way above me still will take,
And on me all the moving days will ripple and break
 Like gentle waves.
The glory of the summer will above me glow,
And all the traffic of the years sweep on, as though
 There were no graves.

The green will surge above me in a tide of Spring,
The blossoms open to the wet skies wondering,
 Silent and slow ;
The winds will wander free above me endlessly,
And the familiar rain will drip and drip on me—
 And I not know !

Requiescat

When I at last with life am done,
When dawns the sky and fades the sun,
When I am tired of work and play,
When I and nothingness are one,

I want one boon—to lie unknown;
For being dead I need no throne:
Not pallisaded round with rails,
Nor crushed beneath a wordy stone.

When I from life am hardly free,
Would you with names still shackle me?
You cannot know what I have won—
This endless ease from memory.

Ah! this wide silence is the best!
You do not dream the peace unguessed
To feel the nagging nerve of Self
Die slowly down and throb to rest.

For, drowned for ever in the sea
Of dumb impersonality,
One with the ocean and the night,
What need of name is there for me?

REQUIESCAT

I shall have stripped from me the stress
Of life, and feel about me press,
Like cooling hands upon my brow,
The death-bands of forgetfulness.

I shall not take with me despair,
Regret, nor memory, nor care;
They are for you: for my shut eyes
A grateful shelter from life's glare.

I shall be friends with praise and blame,
And love and hate will be the same;
And over me the Spring will surge—
And I shall have forgot Spring's name!

For you the birds in riotous throng
Will bravely sing; but I shall long
Have journeyed past the need of them,
Beyond the unrest of their song.

Lo! from the graves that are your care
Dim listless eyes may sometimes stare,
And wonder why the flowers you strew,
And whose the names the grey stones bear!

Yet this above me you may say,
"Some years he from the earth did stray,
But now, with Death long reconciled,
Remembers not he was away.

REQUIESCAT

"He played the trivial drama through—
A little wearily, 'tis true!—
With blind Fate prompting in the wings,
He strove to follow each vague cue.

"He from the stage could not divine
Whether an audience malign
Or friendly judged him from the dark:
He never knew: they gave no sign.

"The futile farce, the bitter mirth
Of this poor pageant of the earth
He saw too clearly—yet he played
His part as if it were of worth.

"Blindly within a blind design
A little while he groped." In fine,
Only this epitaph I ask—
"He did his work: he didn't whine."

Epitaph : The Earth Speaks

Hush ! he drownses, drownses deep,
While my quiet arms I keep
Close about him in his sleep.

Once he glanced at me aghast,
Shuddered from my kiss, and passed—
But I hold him here at last.

He had frenzied thoughts of fame,
Piteous strivings for a name ;
But I called him, and he came.

Called him with the mother-call
When my weary children fall,
Whispering "Home!" to all, to all.

Fair white skin he looked upon ;
Eyes in his with passion shone ;
But my patient love has won.

There was one he deemed to wed ;
But he faltered, came instead
To my narrow bridal bed.

EPITAPH: THE EARTH SPEAKS

Vehement his heart and wild:
Now a little dreaming child
To my kisses reconciled.

Tender heart and turbulent,
I and he together pent
In an aeon of content!

Heaven holds for him no prize.
Snugly nested here he lies
In his narrow paradise.

When his trump God's angel blows;
When he shudders, wakens, knows,
I shall hold him close, so close!

He will feel Life's aching pain,
Turn his lips to me . . . and then
Sink to dreamless sleep again.

So for aye my love I keep
Here upon my breast asleep.
Hush! he drowns . . . drowns . . . deep.

Funeral March

Hush! let the hearse go by!
Robed in his tawdry, piteous pretence,
Upon his triumph high
Let the proud dead ride by!
Humble your head; allow
To that impassive brow,
Crowned with Death's majesty, due reverence:
He is a monarch now.

Down the loud-surgings street
He passes imperturbable; for he
Has won beyond defeat,
Is victor of the street;
For he through youth and age
Has passed each 'prentice-stage,
And now with strutting pomp and pageantry
Comes to his heritage.

For he is now Death's friend,
Can walk abroad and talk familiarly
With him, and have him bend
Above him—Death, his friend!

FUNERAL MARCH

And, satisfied and calm,
His soul has this for balm:
He is the chosen comrade; only he
May link in Death's his arm.

Perhaps he had a soul
Within this worn-out body. Did it wake
And strive toward some far goal?
Surely he had a soul!
For he was once a child,
With teasing hopes beguiled,
With all this world for toy, to love—and break . . .
Now he is reconciled.

Yes, dowered he was with soul,
But only dimly. In a misty maze,
How could he see life whole
From that poor clouded soul?
How could he read aright
The vagueness of his sight?
The God who clogged his senses, dulled his gaze,
Knows well He must requite.

Yet he one moment clear
Had glimpsed at God, been subtly conscious of
Some new need, warm and near.
On some dim moon-night clear
Had heard above him beat
One moment, and retreat,
The vast-spread winds of God's wide-brooding love . . .
And known one woman sweet.

FUNERAL MARCH

And she who dries her tears
Once kissed him madly, called him "Dearest!" . . . Fie!
Life must be lived, my dears,
And widows dry their tears!
Yet in a sorrow dim,
Though eyes no longer swim,
She dully questions, asks God why? . . . and why?
Yearns sullenly for him.

She was a common girl.
A million more like her have gone to death.
For swine, perhaps, a pearl—
This wife, this common girl.
Yet one day rapt he stood,
Caught her in a new mood,
Saw her divine, like her of Nazareth,
With whispered motherhood.

And when the wonder came,
How he had halted, made rude reverence,
Blinking as to a flame
When he before her came.
It seemed he had defiled
This mother, frail and mild;
As from a shrine profaned had hurried thence,
And left her with her child.

Ah! but he flouted Death
With children growing, grasping Life; each birth,
Each querulous cry, each breath
A challenge to chill Death!

FUNERAL MARCH

And now his work is done,
And he is tired and gone,
This is the epitaph of grateful earth:
"Life's torch he handed on!"

He builded something here;
On work's cairn piled his stone; he did not shirk
The duty mean and near.
Something he builded here.
He labored, till at last,
Long years of toil amassed,
He died, a self-made plutocrat of work . . .
Pause, till the hearse has passed!

This is the end of all.
He failed, was wilful, weak; he squandered much
God gave to him. This pall,
This hearse, the end of all?
Nothing heroic here:
This grey life, dumb and drear—
Yet if he managed some dim truth to touch . . .?
He does not need your tear.

Judge him? You do not dare!
Each has his separate universe. How then
By that poor symbol there
Judge him? You do not dare!
His was the sordid lot,
Soon finished, soon forgot;
He went the common, easy way. Ah, men!—
Ah, God!—judge not, judge not!

FUNERAL MARCH

Ready was he for rest,
And tired of all this turmoil, where his way
He could not see. So best
Beside the path to rest.
You question me, can I
Some distant hope descry?
You ask *me?* . . . Is there aught but this to say?
"Hush! Let the hearse go by."

The Tavern

Outside is a world wind-stripped and wide,
A starless horror of storm ;
But we poor devils may sit inside
In our tavern vile
For a little while,
With the liquor to keep us warm.

For one with the wine of Joy is drunk,
Another is fuddled with Prayer,
And one in the torpor of Faith is sunk,
And one drinks deep
His draught of sleep,
And one lies drugged with Care.

Our tavern window—a star in Space—
Looks out on the lonely hill ;
But huddled here we have found a place
Where with humankind
We have drunk and dined—
But where each must pay his bill.

With Life the room is warm and bright ;
Yet when each must pay his score
A summons comes from the starless night—

THE TAVERN

A tap at the pane—
Or is it the rain?—
And a fumbling Hand at the door!

And he who receives that summons dread,
Must arise at its command;
And when his curt "Good-night" is said,
Must go alone
On a road unknown
In the clutch of that fumbling Hand!

He pays his bill; and we others know
We shall hear his laugh no more.
And mute eyes ask a question slow—
So thus it ends?
Or finds he friends
Through that sullenly closing door?

So one to the lonely void goes out
With his laughter ringing clear;
One swaggers off with a reckless shout;
One goes with a verse,
And one with a curse:
Not one with a shudder of fear.

And one, long finished with fears and hopes,
Flings out with a stubborn lip;
His friendly hand for that grey Hand gropes:
What use to whine? . . .
And we wait for a sign;
And listen, and wonder, and sip.

THE TAVERN

For each must go when his time has come
Not alone through that drenching night.
With his soul and that one Companion dumb
He takes the track ;
But he comes not back,
Drowned deep from the tavern light.

There are other taverns, this one believes,
In that un-horized dearth ;
But one cares not, nor hopes nor grieves :
The coin will spin . . .
Is there more to win ?
And—what is its winning worth ?

The room grows empty and desolate ;
The dead fire sinks to a glow ;
And, sipping slowly, I dream and wait . . .
Till whimpers the rain
At the window-pane,
And I guess it is time to go.

Is this lone inn on the rain-swept hill
The last where I shall sit ?
Or shall I find more taverns still ?
When I have traced
The star-blind waste,
Shall I see a window lit ?

What matter to me if the tipsters lie ?
What difference if they should ?
For—though the price was fairly high—

THE TAVERN

I have drunk my fill
And paid the bill—
And the liquor was fairly good.

The grey Companion waits for me.
He is busy to-night. Be strong!
Those long lean fingers at the key! . . .
So into the night
With a head upright,
And on ashen lips a song.

The Ballad of Judgment Day

The Criminal came to the Throne of God

At the close of the Judgment Day,
And with a truculent step he trod:

He had come to say his say—
And he held his head—it was sideways set,
And the bruise of the noose was on it yet—
Upright, in an awkward way.

The serried hosts his curt glance swept.

Before his eyes theirs fell;
And jauntily up to the Throne he stepped:
'Twas a scene he knew so well!
To the Judge he nodded—he had no awe,
For he was familiar with courts of law,
And had often been sent to Hell!

The Judge began to drone the law;

But he, with a wry grimace,
Uplifted a hand that looked a claw,
And thrust up his narrow face.
And over the startled face of One
A horrible shudder seemed to run—
A shudder that trailed through Space.

THE BALLAD OF JUDGMENT DAY

The hosts of Paradise, swept with fears,
Their spherical music stayed
A moment—or a thousand years—
While, fleeing, unafraid,
Before the Plotter stood his Plan—
The Master-Workman and his Man—
This grim Tool he had made.

“Because their laws I went and broke,
They hanged me high,” said he.
“They got quits with me for my little joke;
But I’m jiggered if I can see
If ’twas Jester or Devil that dared to make
These laws, and then—his laws to break—
Deliberately made Me?”

The Felon straightened his sideways head;
(The Judge quailed from his frown!)
“Take off that motley robe,” he said;
“Take off that noose-like crown!
By your works you shall be judged, you know;
And *I* am a beautiful work to show!
From your pantomime Throne—step down!”

And at his scorn the serried hosts
That sat round, ring on ring,
All dwindled, paling, into ghosts;
While He, their discrowned King,
Stepped cringing from his futile Throne,
And stood, in all wide space alone,
A shivering, naked thing.

THE BALLAD OF JUDGMENT DAY

And over the ruins of Paradise,
And over the endless dead
The Convict with the little eyes
Slouched with his leg-iron tread.
And on the cracked old Throne he sat,
With the halo like a tilted hat
Upon his sideways head.

"You might have made a thing of pride,"
He sneered, "for you were shod
With majesty and puissance wide.
You didn't—though you were God!
And all your high, tremendous powers,
And all your length of endless hours
Made me—this pretty clod!

"All that you dreamed of, builded, hoped
Through all eternity,
All that you fumbled for and groped,
Summed in this face you see.
So high on the wall of your banquet hall
I set my mark in my gaol-birl scrawl—
This 'MENE TEKEL'—*Me!*

"So by this narrowed, slanted brow,
This sullen, bestial jaw—
It was murderer's work!—I doom you now!
This make-shift botch, this flaw

THE BALLAD OF JUDGMENT DAY

You wilfully out of Nothing brought ;
So at your throat—'tis a trick *you* taught !—
My hand that is a claw !”

Then he summoned before his Judgment Seat
The Powers that had done
This thing, and spawned their incomplete
And maimed and twisted son.
And, sitting stiff on that Throne of Dread,
With his crooked eyes and his crooked head,
He doomed them, one by one.

First, Evolution, with its wiles,
Its endless, pitiless strife,
And Love that maimed with subtle smiles,
And Hatred, with his knife,
And Kings and Conquerors and Trade,
And all the Gods that Man had made ;
And, lastly, he doomed Life.

And so at last he was left alone,
This King of claw and fang,
A sideways thing on a tottering Throne :
There were no more to hang !
And, from that desolated place
At the end of Time, far out through Space
His bitter laughter rang.

THE BALLAD OF JUDGMENT DAY.

The crumbling walls of Space were rent,
The stars rained in a rout ;
And, shattering, through each atom went
A cataclysmic Doubt.
And, like a sickening candle light,
Into its old, primeval Night
The Universe guttered out.

Envoi: The Victor

The World mourned by, like a Puritan,
With gladness and laughter beneath her ban;
And, lonely and starving, there laughed a man
Building high verse, and happy.

"There is work to do!" said the World with a sigh;
But the man exultantly made reply,
"I dream and wonder . . . and starve, maybe, I,
Building high verse, and happy!"

"Your verse," said the World, "is no use to me!"
And the man looked up impatiently;
"I've no time to listen to you!" said he,
Building high verse, and happy.

The World grew angered at his whim.
She laughed herself—but her laugh was grim;
And ruthlessly she murdered him
Building high verse, and happy!

THE END.

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